NEWS / A5
Court dismisses media class suit vs government over Peninsula arrests

THE WORLD / A25
Americans have right to bear arms, US high court says in landmark ruling

SATURDAY SPECIAL / G3
Open auditions for 'Cory,' the musical, on June 29 at Sta. Ana Arts Center

SAME TIME THIS WEEK The price board is adjusted at a service station in Manila where petroleum prices for five successive weekends have been raised by P1.50.

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SC junks Trillanes dream to attend Senate hearings

By Kristine L. Alave

THE SUPREME COURT YESTERDAY quashed the dream of Sen. Antonio Trillanes IV who is on trial for coup d'etat against the Arroyo administration, to discharge his legislative duties on the Senate floor.

In a unanimous 16-page decision

SC JUNKS A8

Oil hikes past $140/bbl; local prices breach ₱60 for 1st time

NEW YORK—OIL PRICES SURGED nearly 4 percent to a record above $140 a barrel on Thursday after Libya said it was studying possible options to cut output in response to potential United States actions against producer countries.

US crude settled up $5.08 at $139.64 a barrel, after hitting an all-time high of $140.39 earlier, eclipsing the previous record of $138.89 a barrel hit on June

OIL A14

To win, Pacman should avoid phone booth duel

By Norah Trinidad

ALL THINGS BEING UNEQUAL, ALL THAT Manny Pacquiao may have to do to ensure victory in Las Vegas on Sunday is avoid being dragged and trapped to a telephone booth slug-out with David Diaz.

ANALYSIS

With his tremendous edge in firepower, Pacquiao could easily sustain a slashing offensive and prevail.

But, at the same time, he should not yield to pressure and avoid being caught in a toe-to-toe, dungeon-like battle with the reigning World Boxing Council lightweight champion, who is the seeded underdog.

The unrealistic pre-fight odds attest to Pacquiao's edge in practically all departments.

TO WIN A3

IN THIS CORNER RP's pride extends a press conf in Las Vegas on his 12-round boxing title match vs WBC lightweight champ David Diaz.

Toxic cargo stops search

36 divers undergo battery of tests

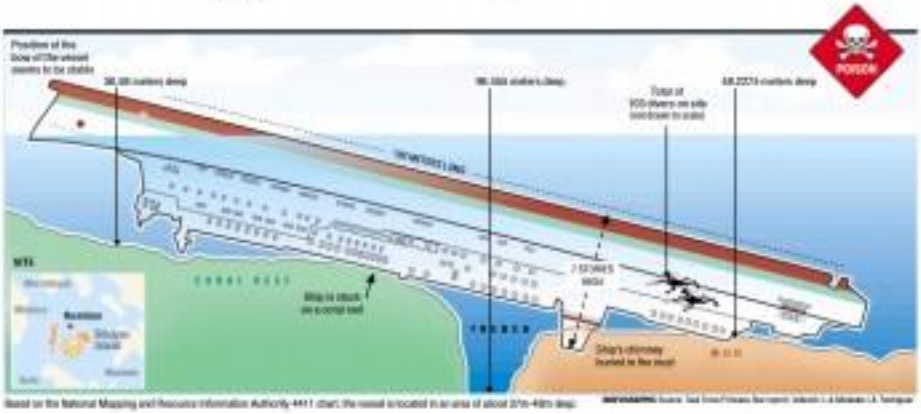
By Tarra Quismundo
in Sibuyan Island
Nikko Dizon in Manila

SIBUYAN SEA—THE discovery that the MV Princess of the Stars was carrying the toxic pesticide endosulfan when it set sail has prompted the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) to suspend search, rescue and retrieval operations in the area where it sank on June 21 at the height of Typhoon "Frank."

The local government of San Fernando, the coastal town closest to the site, yesterday ordered some 22,000 residents not to dive, swim or fish, effectively cutting into their primary source of livelihood.

"This is just a precautionary measure," Mayor Nanette Tan-Ingco told her constituents on

TOXIC A10



Based on the National Mapping and Resource Information Authority 4411 chart, the vessel is located in an area of about 270–480 deep.

US aircraft carrier 'stays at edge' of RP waters

By Juliet Labog-Javellana

NEW YORK (VIA PLDT)—AMID criticism from Filipino militants, the nuclear-powered aircraft carrier USS Ronald Reagan will keep out of Philippine territory and merely stay "at the edge" of its waters, President Macapagal-Arroyo said here.

In a speech to the Filipino community on Wednesday at the Hilton Hotel ballroom, Ms Arroyo thanked the United States for sending the carrier to help victims of Typhoon "Frank" in the Philippines.

"Siya lang may kaya-unang naglakbas na naiman. May nuclear weapons dine ang aircraft carrier, kaya hawak raw pamunuan sa Pilipinas. Pero no kinang kanan ang energy, momentarili na lang ito sa dulo ng territorial waters ng Pilipinas," Ms Arroyo said.

(But there are those who are criticizing it. Supposedly the aircraft carrier is carrying nuclear weapons so it is barred from going to the Philippines. To avoid controversies, it will just stay at the edge of the territorial waters of the Philippines).

US AIRCRAFT A11

GROUND ZERO Aboard a tugboat, Coast Guard chief Vice Adm. Wilfredo Tamayo briefs the media on the suspension of search and retrieval operations due to the presence inside the sunken ship of a highly toxic substance.

Survivor returns to Sibuyan for lost love

By Tarra Quismundo

SAN FERNANDO, SIBUYAN Island—The search for his missing girlfriend has brought survivor Jonny Relativo back to where he almost lost his life.

Relativo, one of the 57 survivors of the capsized MV Princess of the Stars, was able to board a life raft that was washed ashore in Mulanay, Quezon, on Sunday.

Mulanay is some 98 kilometers away from the site of the disaster.

He returned to Sitio Cabisuan here on Thursday, hoping to get news about his pregnant girlfriend, 22-year-old Roselyn Ligot.

The couple had boarded the MV Princess of the Stars in Manila for Cebu last Friday to

SURVIVOR A11

US woman high on dream house made of 747 parts

MALIBU, CALIFORNIA—THE neighborhood already has a house that scientists say looks like a giant storm stranded, and nearby there is another that is perched on a cylindrical tower and looks like a flying saucer.

But when Francois Rebsamen moves into her new digs sometime next year, she'll have

US WOMAN A6

Sulpicio pins blame on weather bureau

By Alburo W. Lopez
and Jorsme Aning

SULPICIO LINES HAS BLAMED the weather bureau for its allegedly inaccurate reports on the movements of Typhoon "Frank" which it said caused the sinking of the company's Princess of the Stars.

The company said it was considering suing the Philippine Atmospheric and Geophysical, Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa), the country's weather forecaster, for gross negligence.

SULPICIO A17

GMA settles for 30-minute phone call with busy Obama

By Juliet Labog-Javellana

NEW YORK CITY (VIA PLDT)—He couldn't meet with her in person but a 30-minute phone call from US Sen. Barack Obama was enough to get a very busy President Macapagal-Arroyo in good spirits.

"He called up the President at 3:15 p.m. Thursday (Friday in Manila). They talked for 30 minutes," said Ambassador Marciano Paynor Jr., consul general to San Francisco and concurrent presidential adviser on foreign affairs.

"The President was in very high spirits after the call." Press Secretary Jesus Dureza said in a briefing for reporters covering Ms Arroyo's 10-day US trip.

Aside from meeting with US President George W. Bush, she planned to meet with Obama, Democratic presidential candidate, and his Republican rival, Sen. John McCain.

While her meeting with Bush took place on Tuesday without a hitch, meeting the two rival candidates proved to be difficult, particularly Obama.

After several changes in date and venue, the meeting with Obama was supposed to take place on Thursday evening in Washington, DC. This would have required Ms Arroyo to fly from New York to the US capital on Thursday evening, then come back to finish her hectic schedule in New York on Friday. She will then fly again to Washington, DC

GMA SETTLES A17

WEATHER FORECAST

Manila	Partly cloudy	Iloilo	Partly cloudy
Tuguegarao	Partly cloudy	Cebu	Partly cloudy
Laoag	Partly cloudy	Dumaguete	Partly cloudy
Cloud base	Partly cloudy	Zamboanga	Partly cloudy
Baguio	Partly cloudy	Cagayan de Oro	Partly cloudy
Legazpi	Partly cloudy	Davao	Mostly cloudy

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GMA campaigns for Miriam

Says she's qualified for ICJ post

By Jaime Laya Jaemillana

NEW YORK (VIA PLDT)—PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-Arroyo campaigned here for the candidacy of Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago for a seat in the International Court of Justice, praising her as "independent, rough-minded and well-qualified."

"She would serve as an example of effective gender mainstreaming, because validly, **our support if she's elected, she'll become** the first woman from Asia to the International Court of Justice," Mrs Arroyo said at a reception for permanent UN representatives held at the UN headquarters on Thursday afternoon.

Mr Arroyo presented Santiago to the country's nominees to the ICJ.

"We can assure you that first, your Santiago will do justice to the interests of justice across the globe," the President said.

She received several ambassadors from different UN member-countries, who will cast their votes in the ICJ election, together with Santiago and Ambassador Lilian Davids Jr.

UN judicial organ

Santiago is gunning for a seat in the 15-member ICJ, the UN's **judicial organ, against** ambassadors from Jordan who is seeking reelection in the dispute-resolution body.

Santiago, however, expressed optimism that she has the numbers in the bag for the election **later this year. She needs a majority** of the 192 UN-member states, or 97 votes to win the ICJ seat.

"Over 100 votes is already pledged in a serious way, not **just verbally," she revealed.**

In a talk with reporters covering Mrs Arroyo's 10-day trip to the US, Santiago hinted a meeting to her political rivals.

"If I don't make it, then I'll probably run for president of the Philippines," she said in jest, adding "That is just to put voices in the heart of my enemies."

If she wins in the November elections, Santiago will have to resign from the Senate when her nine-year term begins in January next year.

"I would have to resign because the term will begin by about the first week of January and I would state about one year of my term as if that happens, I hope then the electorate will forgive me. But I do know that my enemies will heave a collective sigh of relief. That's my only regret," Santiago said.

Asean support

Santiago said she has gotten the support of many countries **for her ICJ bid,** led by the Asean countries of Southeast Asian Nations and others with whom the Philippines has a DFQ (quid pro quo) arrangement.

"That is to say, the Philippines has promised to exchange a vote with that other state. If the state votes for the Philippines for the world court, the Philippines *will vote for that state's candidate for* some other UN agency in the immediate future," she explained.

"We have [enough votes.] I cannot say the exact numerical figure because obviously that's a matter of confidentiality. But let me just say that as far as securing **a the composition of the** Department of Foreign Affairs, the highest evidence can be placed on a country with a DFQ and the next is a unilateral vote. That is to say **that they don't even vouch any** vote in exchange. They just want **to support the Philippines maybe** because of regional ties or historical ties where they already supported **each other here in the** UN," she said.

Santiago said her greatest strength in the ICJ contest is her being a woman.

Mr Arroyo said the Philippines had always been supportive of the UN, sending the most **number of policemen to serve in** peace missions in troubled spots of the world.

"Out of the ruins of World War II, a war ravaged Philippines, together with many of your countries, became a founder of the United Nations so that global war would never again be allowed to show its evil face. The Philippines **fervently believed, as many of your** countries believed, the UN would help ensure that human rights and human justice would prevail so life up humanity," she said.

"In sum, the Philippines is only a child of the values and aspirations of the United Nations. Every day we work to fill up ourselves and the world, to serve humankind and bring social justice, gender equality and human dignity to our people and the world. And on our part, we would like to say that to our successors these values have been [the Philippine former Miriam Defensor Santiago]," Mrs Arroyo said.

PRESIDENT Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, Sen. Miriam Defensor Santiago and Foreign Secretary Alberto Romulo are received by Philippine Representative to the United Nation Hilario Davide Jr. (right) at UN Headquarters in New York City on Thursday.

NBN-ZTE deal chop-chopped, solon warns

By Christian V. Esguerra

A LEADER WARNED that the scandal-ridden National Broadband Network (NBN) deal may still be alive but is being repackaged to escape public scrutiny.

Bayan Muna Rep. Teodoro Casiño yesterday raised the alarm over the possibility that the Arroyo administration was "breaking up into parts" the controversial project, beginning with the Department of Transportation and Communications' Telecommunications Infrastructure Project (TIOP).

"The project would initially cost P300 million to link 22 agencies, according to Casiño. He said the Philippine Postal Corp. was implementing a similar project worth P1.4 billion under the build-operate-transfer scheme.

"Apparently, these things, there we might be in for a big surprise—as MIN-with-a different name."

Casiño warned in June when exactly the DOTC would get funds for the OEE who authorized the amount, and whether the money had been approved by Congress. He said the agency should also identify the supplier for the project.

"I suggest that Secretary Mendoza formally include the OEP in his department's 2009 budget so that we can properly examine it during the coming budget deliberation," he said.

WHAT'S INSIDE

SOURCE of P15-M ransom for Ces unconfirmed /A6

ARMM voting machines easy to use, says Comelec /A12

Prosecutors told to ask SC for revival of old Erap case

By Jocelyn R. Uy

THE SANDIGANBAYAN YESTERDAY urged government prosecutors to go to the Supreme Court for clarification concerning their bid to reopen an old perjury case against convicted plunderer former President Joseph Estrada.

Presiding Justice Efrenido Penaflor, who chairs the Special Division, told state prosecutors to file a motion with the high court so the anti-graft court can be advised as to whether it can hear the case.

"The position of the prosecution is correct but as to whether or not it can present evidence not marked during the trial, we cannot go ahead because the Supreme Court already ruled it to be mere oral utterance," said Penaflor.

Earlier this week, state prosecutors moved to proceed with the prosecution of Criminal Case No. 26884, in which Estrada is charged with making false claims on his April 26, 2000 statement of assets and liabilities.

Prosecutors argued that the case was still pending before the First Division as it was not the same as the perjury case that the Special Division dismissed on Sept. 12, 2007 when it considered Estrada of plunder.

Estrada yesterday described the move to revive the perjury case as "another chapter in a continuing story of harassment and political persecution" against him.

"Instead of resurrecting a case already dismissed by the Supreme Court, these prosecutors should instead run after corrupt public officials like Jun-Jun Ordoner, Gen Dove and others who are the real criminals, and who are the reason why the World Bank has declared corruption in the Philippines as the worst in East Asia," Estrada said in a statement.

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House to review AFP's Articles of War

By Nikko Dizon

THE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN Rights of the House of Representatives might review the "anti-quated" provisions of the Articles of War governing the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) to update them and make them more applicable to the times.

"We would propose a review of the Articles of War because it is already anticipated. Remember, it was passed during the Commonwealth period," said Quezon Rep. Lorenzo Tañada III, chair of the human rights committee.

Tañada said this was the committee's consensus following a surprise visit last Wednesday by the committee members and Commission on Human Rights (CHR) Chairman Leila de Lima to the six military officers detained in the AFP Custodial Center for their alleged involvement in the failed February 2006 power grab.

Part of hearings

The officers, former Marine Commandant Brig. Gen. Renato Miranda, Marine Colonels Ariel Querubin, Orlando de Leon, and Achilles Bugnosen; Army Scout Rangers Colonel Edmundo Matubangco and Major Jason Aquino, are serving the 20 military officers being cited for contempt by a military tribunal.

Tañada said the review of the Articles of War was among those the committee and De Lima discussed with the detained officers.

"First, Miranda had something significant to say. He said that it would be very hard to keep aspirational military establishment if the leaders of the military are given too much discretion and would be too influential," Tañada said.

The visit by the committee and CHR to check on the officers' living conditions broke their detention cells at the Intelligence Service of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (Isafp) compound in Camp Aguinaldo was part of the committee hearings being conducted following complaints by the officers' wives that their husbands' rights were being violated.

The group will also visit other officers detained at the Army stockade in Camp Capinpin in Tanay, Rizal, the Army's Intelligence Service Group, and the Logistics Compound in Camp Aguinaldo.

Tañada said the committee would visit Army Brig. Gen. Danilo Lim at the Camp Crame custodial center where he is detained with the Magdalo officers led by Sen. Antonio Trillanes IV to get his input on possible revisions to the Articles of War.

De Lima said the Articles of War should be "made attuned to human rights standards and human rights conventions to which the Philippines is a signatory."

"Most of the provisions in the Articles of War are passe and were applicable only in times of war," de Lima said.

AFP chief of staff Gen. Alexander Yano agreed that the Articles of War was outmoded. "I would welcome any re-evaluation or study of the Articles of War so that it can address the present situation of the AFP and be responsive to the soldiers," Yano said.

The AFP chief of staff, however, stressed that the present provisions in the Articles of War would be applied on the members of the AFP for as long as it is in effect.

Bayan Muna party-list Representative Satur Ocampo was among the committee members who visited the detained officers. Ocampo told the group he received a lot of good-natured ribbing from the detained military officers.

Ocampo said Miranda and Querubin jokingly kept on making references in his resolutions to him (Ocampo) and his group during their meeting that lasted nearly three hours.

Familiar conditions

"They said I am familiar with that kind of living condition," Ocampo said, referring to the cell once detained at the NBI's Intelligence Service Group (ISG) during martial law.

"I am familiar with the place. There's a narrow cell and a small, high wall," Ocampo recalled of the ISG detention compound.

Ocampo was placed under solitary confinement for nine months during the Marcos regime.

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AI warns Malaysia vs expulsion of illegals

KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA—AN INTERnational rights group urged Malaysia on Friday to revise its plan to chase out tens of thousands of Filipino and Indonesian illegal immigrants amid concerns it may lead to human rights violations.

Amnesty International Malaysia said the immigrants include a large number of asylum seekers and refugees who had fled from the conflict-ridden Mindanao region in the southern Philippines to Malaysia's eastern Sabah state in Borneo island.

In addition, many are stateless people and migrants who had lived in Sabah for more than a decade, including children who now risk being expelled.

"We fear that the simplistic and arbitrary action of mass crackdown by the federal government in addressing such a serious and complex issue will elevate the ongoing human rights and humanitarian concerns in Sabah and the region to a serious crisis level," it said in a statement.

"We are of the opinion that the federal government's unilateral action may result in serious human rights violations."

Cruel treatment

Amnesty cited concerns such as inadequate care of detainees, problems including flogging under immigration laws, and lack of adequate health care in detention for women, children and other vulnerable groups.

In 2002, it said reports indicated that mass deportations of undocumented migrants led to deaths of children due to dehydration and disease in Sabah's detention centers.

Amnesty urged the government to study the migrant issue in Sabah carefully before taking any action.

Government officials were not immediately available for comment.

Deputy Prime Minister Najib Razak announced Tuesday that authorities will soon launch a massive operation in Sabah to arrest and deport foreigners without travel or identification documents from Sabah, which borders both the Philippines and Indonesia.

Authorities estimated there are some 136,000 illegals in Sabah. But the state's politicians insist the real figure is several times that, and claim that foreigners outnumber Malaysians in some provinces.

The issue has long been a bone of contention for Sabah politicians, who accuse the federal government of failing to curb job-seeking foreigners after their permits expire.

In its last crackdown in 2005, the government deported 300,000 illegal immigrants, mostly Indonesians, from Sabah.

Indonesian officials have expressed concerns that the new expulsion plan could lead to a demand for workers in Sabah's orchards and plantations industries, which will again encourage the return of illegal immigrants. AP

Ding Ma. Alberto; 77

FERNANDO "DING" MA. ALBERTO, CORporate lawyer and former legal counsel of the Republic Broadcasting System, the Kapisanan ng mga Brodkaster sa Pilipinas (KBP), and several other telecommunications companies, died of cardiac arrest on Thursday. He was 77.

He is survived by his wife, Evangeline Rosario Alberto; children, Fernando (Dindo) and Merle, Ricky and Angie, Eric and Chari, Mitzie, Clemente, Linh and Kenny North, Joy and Bobby Federico, and Toby and Cat. After the wake at the Cleto dela Xing Church, Ermin Mendoza, Quezon City, his body will be cremated and remains will be interred at the Heritage Park.

Court junks media suit vs gov't over Pen arrests

By Tina Alberto
tina@inq7.net

A MANILA CITY TRIAL COURT has dismissed the charges filed by journalists and media organizations against government officials over the arrests of media workers during the takeover by rebel soldiers of the Peninsula Manila hotel in November last year.

Judge Reynaldo Laigo of Makati Regional Trial Court Branch 56 dismissed the libel suit against Defense Secretary Gilberto Teodoro Jr., Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez, Philippine National Police Director General Avelino Razon Jr., National Capital Region Police Office Director Geary Barias, among others, for alleged violation of press freedom the arrests and Gonzalez's statement that journalists would be arrested should similar circumstances occur.

The decision said the defendants were able to justify the arrest of the journalists who refused to leave the 5 p.m. deadline set by Baligad in their release the hotel.

It also noted nothing was wrong with Gonzalez's warning.

"Upon thorough examination of the sworn quoted allegations of the complaint, the Court finds that the same do not constitute sufficient cause of action for damages against the defendants that warrants further prosecution of the instant case," the decision said.

"To begin with, the right of the plaintiffs as members of the press so guaranteed under the Constitution was not violated and trampled upon by the respective acts of the defendants complained of," it added.

Harry Roque, the plaintiffs' legal counsel, said they would appeal the case to higher court, claiming there were no grounds to dismiss the case.

"Definitely we will appeal. In the first place there was no trial on the merits of the case. It is not proper to dismiss the case because the matter of defense has to be proven first in court," Roque told Inquirer.net in a phone interview.

Roque maintained that Gonzalez and other government officials "oppressed the abusive, arbitrary and repressive manner in which policemen treated the journalists who were covering the Manila Peninsula standoff and threatened to unleash the same treatment against journalists in future news events of similar nature."

"Thus, we maintain that restricting the movement of the press in such a threatening manner, taking into account the totality of the official acts of the police and the Executive (Gonzalez et Amelet), constitutes an invisible threat of state retaliation by its police and prosecutorial forces should the press remain intransigent that the police desires as a crime scene," he added.

Malaya newspaper's chief correspondent Ellen Tordesillas, one of the plaintiffs, also expressed dismay at the court's decision, maintaining that the public's right to know was higher than any police orders.

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Mindanao security now better despite kidnap—GMA

By Michael Lim Ubac

DESPITE THE RECENT ABDUCTION OF ABS-CBN senior reporter Ces Drilon and her crew by Abu Sayyaf bandits, the security situation in Mindanao has improved over the years, President Macapagal-Arroyo told CNN yesterday.

In an interview with CNN US affairs editor Jill Dougherty in Washington, President Arroyo said the country "had tremendous success in fighting terrorism in the Philippines."

"In fact, that has been the message that I have received from President (George) Bush and from Secretary (Robert) Gates about how much improved the situation in Southern Philippines is, compared to many years ago when this was an issue started," said Ms Arroyo.

But the President in effect said that Drilon and her news team were also to blame for their ordeal, which ended on June 16 after the payment of a total of P32 million in ransom.

"Despite the warnings of everybody, it was caused by the fact that journalists received their tip, the hot where they were already hiding in the jungle," said President Arroyo.

The President will return to Manila on Monday after a 10-day working visit to the US highlighted by her meeting with US President George W. Bush in the Oval Office on Tuesday.

The ABS-CBN news team and professor Octavio Dinampo were kidnapped by alleged members of the Abu Sayyaf Group while pursuing a story in Jolo and were held captive for nine days before they were safely released, following the payment of ransom.

'Board and lodging fee'

Cotabato City Mayor Muslimin Sema was fired on June 12 after payment of a "board and lodging fee," which was later revealed to be P5 million.

But Police Director General Avelino Razon Jr. claimed that Mayor Alvarez Imad, who acted as chief negotiator during the hostage crisis, and his son Haider received P3 million and handed over only P2 million to Drilon's abductors.

The hostages are now detained at Camp Crame while facing kidnap for ransom charges for allegedly masterminding the abduction.

The Abu Sayyaf Group, along with the communist New People's Army, are considered terrorist organizations by the US and European Union.

The ASG is alleged to have links with the regional terror network Jemaah Islamiyah and Osama bin Ladin's al-Qaida, a major concern of the US which has maintained its presence in Mindanao and poured in hundreds of millions of dollars into various projects in the impoverished region.

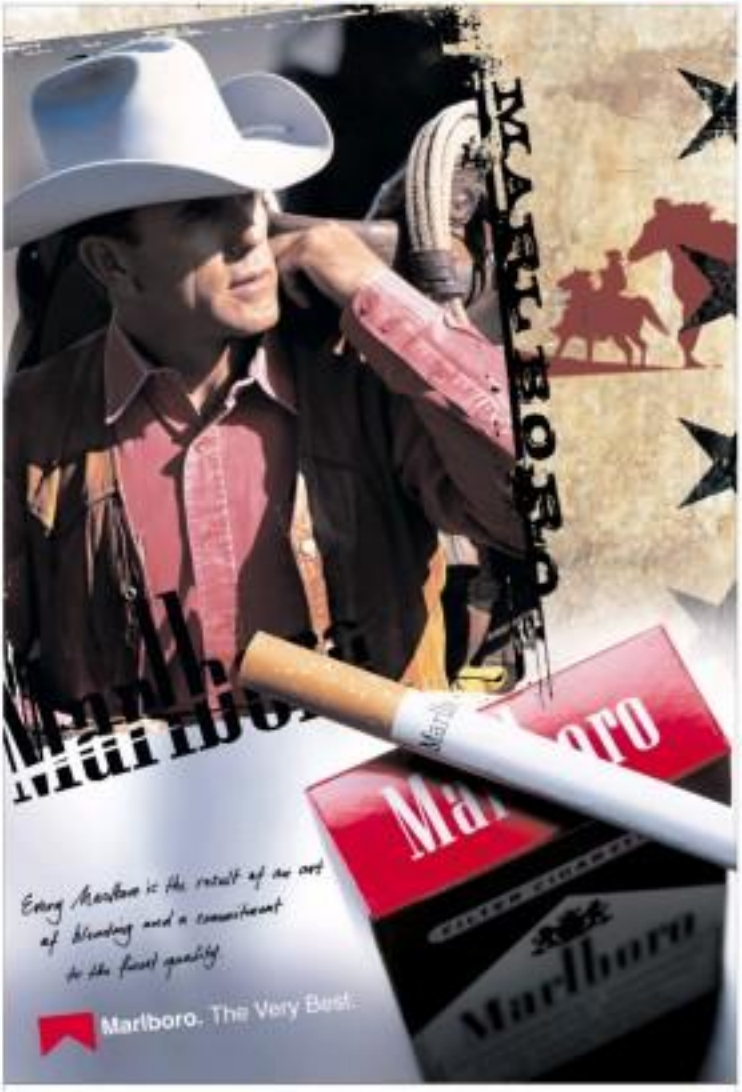
President Arroyo, however, pointed out that the "terrorist list has really been narrowing ... precisely because of the partnership (between) the Philippines and the US—one promoting the paradigm for peace—we just made that of the soft power of community projects and infrastructure, and the hard power of modernizing our professional military."

When asked by Dougherty about the stability of her administration following a series of coup attempts, an optimistic Ms Arroyo said the country was "politically stable and economically on a path to permanent growth and stability."

"And those who try to disrupt our peace and our progress are out of touch with the hopes and dreams of the average Filipino, which is to have a better life and which is to have a stable surrounding. And that's why they all fail," said the President.

President Arroyo also made mention of the "unfortunate legacy of corruption," which was cited by coup planners and the opposition allies as one of the major reasons why she should step down.

"But we are addressing it head on. And we will continue to hold officials if they are found to be corrupt," she said.



Sandigan junks Nani's plea to dismiss raps

By Jocelyn R. Uy

THE SANDIGANBAYAN HAS ruled it will proceed with trying ex-Justice Secretary Hernando "Nani" Perez on robbery and extortion charges as it rejected his petition to quash.

The antigraft court's Second Division affirmed on Thursday that the Office of the Ombudsman had "adequately alleged" the elements of robbery in the information it filed on Perez.

Associate Justice Teresita Leonardo-De Castro, chair of the Second Division, ordered that the pre-trial proceed on Monday, when former Manila Rep. Mark Jimenez is expected to ratify against Perez.

Earlier this week, government prosecutors asked the antigraft court to summon Jimenez, who lodged the complaint in 2002, but withdrew it from the Ombudsman after the years.

Lani recently, Perez and his wife, Rosario, and two other co-accused—brother-in-law Ramon Abeo and business associate Ernani Escolar—sought for the quashing of the information pinning them on the charges, saying the Ombudsman did not have the authority to file the case.

The robbery-extortion case filed against the four was prompted by allegations of Jimenez that the then justice secretary executed 32 outlines from him in exchange for non-disbarment of the names of personalities involved in the bribery scandal involving a power deal in 1998.

The scandal arose from reports that former President Joseph Estrada was offered $1.4 million to approve the contract between the National Power Corp. and the Aggregate Inc. Impsa to build and run a hydroelectric plant in Laguna.

The accused also argued that the facts cited in the information did not constitute an offense.

"We are not convinced... Subjecting on a crucible of analysis the allegations of the information in this case, there is no other logical conclusion but that the elements of the crime charged have been adequately and sufficiently alleged," the court said.

It also rejected the claim of the Perezes that the move to file the case was politically tainted.

"In fact, the prosecution denied such allegation when it raised the said allegation," stated the court.

"Since this is the premise upon which the motion concludes, rather erroneously that the claimed delay in the filing of information effectively divested [the Ombudsman] of the authority to file the information, the court does not accord any affirmative relief to the movants," it added.

Ahead. WHERE WE PLACE YOU.

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SCHEDULE OF ENTRANCE EXAMINATION: 8:00 a.m., Saturday, July 5 & 19, 2008

Ahead. WHERE LEADERS PLACE THEMSELVES.

ATENEO GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

St. Paul jubilee year kicks off with Mass on Monday

GAUDENCIO CARDINAL ROSALES will usher in the jubilee of St. Paul in the archdiocese of Manila with a Mass at the Manila Cathedral at 9 a.m. on Monday.

Proposed by parishioners with the Cardinal are the bishops of the nearby dioceses and the priests of the archdiocese. Among the faithful will be delegates from shrines, churches, schools, and institutions which have the Apostle Paul as their patron.

Paul of Tarsus was a former violent persecutor of the Christians. Jesus of Nazareth, who died by crucifixion, was being preached by his followers as risen by God from the dead and to have the long-expected Messiah. The notorious Pharisee saw that the newly emerging Jesus movement was a threat to the Judaic faith and practices and took upon himself the task to destroy the Way.

Road to Damascus

But on the road to Damascus, he was dazzled by the light of Christ, the Lord of glory. Jesus was exactly what his followers proclaimed him to be—the Son of God, the Messiah, and the Savior of the world. Paul was converted and taken total possession by Christ.

From then on, his life was totally given to Christ and the Gospel. He traveled the Mediterranean world, preached the Gospel especially to the Gentiles, founded churches, wrote letters that would become Scripture. His toil and hardship for the Gospel would easily equal, if not surpass, those of any follower of Christ. It would be claimed that the conversion of Paul was second only to the Christ-event in importance to the Christian faith.

But Paul would consider himself only a "servant of Jesus Christ." What he was, all his toil, was due to the grace of God which was at work in him. God's life was then manifested in his mortal body. He, Simon Peter, he also! his blood in Rome. The two apostles are considered the two pillars of the Church of Rome which would become the anchor of the churches.

Jubilee year

Pope Benedict XVI would remember the life of the Apostles with these memorable words: "He lived and worked for Christ, for Him he suffered and died."

One year ago today, the Pope announced in Rome that the Church would dedicate a special Jubilee Year to the apostle Paul, starting today until June 29, 2009, on the occasion of the bimillennium of his birth, which historians have placed between the years 7 and 10 A.D.

Pope Benedict has prepared various invitations for the Faithful. Some some of which would take place in Rome in the papal basilica of St. Paul. Others can easily be carried in other places in the world.

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THE DAILY GOSPEL

Saturday, June 28, 2008
Usik Week in Ordinary Time
Genesis

1st Reading: Gen 2:2, 19-24, 18-19
Gospel: Mt 8:5-17

When Jesus entered Capernaum, an army captain approached him to ask his help, "Sir, my servant lies sick at home. He is paralyzed and suffers terribly." Jesus answered him, "I will come and heal him."

The captain answered, "I am not worthy to have you under my roof. Just give an order and my boy will be healed. For I myself, a junior officer, give orders to my soldiers. And if I say to one, 'Go,' he goes, and if I say to another, 'Come,' he comes, and to my servant, 'Do this,' he does it."

When Jesus heard this he was astonished and said to those who were following him, "I tell you, I have not found such faith in Israel. I say to you, many will come from east and west and sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob at the feast in the kingdom of heaven, but the heirs of the kingdom will be thrown out into the darkness; there they will wail and grind their teeth."

Then Jesus said to the captain, "Go home now. As you believed, so let it be." And at that moment his servant was healed. Jesus went to Peter's house and found Peter's mother-in-law in bed with a fever. He touched her hand and the fever left her; she got up and began to wait on him.

Towards evening they brought to Jesus many possessed by evil spirits, and with a word he drove out the spirits. He also healed all who were sick. In doing this he fulfilled what was said by the prophet Isaiah, He bore our infirmities and took on himself our diseases.

Commentary

The inspirational plot of the Roman officer has become the prayer that we say before receiving Holy Communion. He says that not worthy enough our hungry no earthly drink can quench our thirst. Only the Holy Eucharist can fill our soul that is sinless so, for only the Lord Jesus can heal the soul.

The servant of that man of great faith was healed by the word given by Jesus. It's rightly place our trust to His Holy Word that is present in through the scriptures and the breaking of the bread, the offering of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

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J.V. ONGPIN FINALISTS

Inquirer reporters Norman Bordadora, Allison Lopez and Kea Chichondra pose with Inquirer.net Team editor Fernando del Mundo with their plaques as finalists of the Jaime V. Ongpin Awards for Excellence in Journalism in Thursday's award ceremonies. Bordadora combined with Michael Ubac for the story "Palace document shows gov't plan to neutralize Left." Lopez and Chichondra collaborated with Julius Lalong Jacobino and Julie Alipala for the article "Bridging the Digital Gap." And Del Mundo head the team that also included Margaux Ortiz, Jerry Esplanada, Dante Lucas, TJ Burgonio and Lawrence de Guzman for the series "Inside PCSO: 21 Years Later."

DA assures Panay folk of adequate food supply

By Amy R. Remo

AGRICULTURE SECRETARY ARTHUR C. Yap has assured residents of Panay Island of adequate food supply and stable prices despite the damages wrought by typhoon Frank on the island.

Yap, who had to cut short his trip in the United States, arrived in Iloilo City on Friday for a two-day inspection trip of the island's four provinces which were hit hardest by typhoon "Frank."

In a statement, Yap said the National Food Authority and National Bureau of Investigation were working in tandem in Panay to check price movements and monitor retailers and other businessmen engaged in profiteering and other illicit trade practices.

"The government will seize their stocks and file charges against retailers found unduly jacking up their prices in the aftermath of the worst tropical storm to hit the region in recent years," Yap said.

He stressed that incidents of price spikes were not justified in the face of sufficient food supply in Iloilo and the three other Panay provinces—Capiz, Aklan and Antique.

Yap said he has already ordered the NFA to intervene in rice distribution efforts to stabilize the supply and prices of the staple in the West Visayas island.

Iron-fist provision

"The government will not hesitate to invoke the provision of Republic Act 7581 on the filing of criminal and civil charges against retailers who are profiteering from commodity prices and with their food products seized under summary proceedings," Yap said.

"Tanggapin kayong lahat ang pagkukulang," he said, "sa dami ng sufficient rice supplies in Panay and there is no justification for prices to move the way they have been behaving."

He added that the NFA and NBI have been ordered to initiate cases on filed and seizure of stocks are undertaken against violators of The Price Act so that rice and other food supplies can be sold and distributed to the public at reasonable levels."

"At the same time, the NFA has been ordered to continue distributing rice supplies at increased rates to maintain stable supplies and prices," he added.

The NFA has thus far supplied 2.41 metric tons or 48,761 bags of rice in the markets in Panay.

Before leaving the country last weekend to join President Macapagal-Arroyo in her 10-day working visit to the US, Yap had instructed NFA Administrator Jessup Navarro to source rice from neighboring provinces and flood the city with stocks after the typhoon inundated NFA's main warehouse in the province.

Rehabilitation program

Yap said he would also assess the damage wrought by typhoon "Frank" to agriculture and fisheries and begin working with DA field officials, local executives and other stakeholders on a rehabilitation program for Western Visayas.

The DA-Central Action Center (DA-CAC) reported on June 25 that the tropical storm had partially or totally damaged some P946 million worth of crops in the region, comprising of palay worth P577 million in 61,204 hectares; corn at P340 million in 18,775 hectares; and high value commercial crops or HVCC worth P27.9 million in 618 hectares.

SC junks Trillanes dream to attend Senate ...

HEALTH ADVISORY

FOR RESCUERS AND COMMUNITY RESIDENTS in SAN FERNANDO, ROMBLON

(27 June 2008)

NDCC confirmed today the presence of 10 metric tons of endosulfan in the sunken M/V Princess of the Stars.

Endosulfan is a restricted pesticide for use in pineapple plantations. At toxic levels and following ingestion it can cause death or affect the central nervous system manifesting as headache, dizziness, tremors and convulsions and may also include cardiovascular symptoms. Blood from exposed individuals can be tested to detect presence of the poison. Treatment is supportive.

When released in the environment, endosulfan enters the air, water and soil. It does not dissolve easily in water. Most of the chemical in surface water is attached to soil particles floating in the water or attached to soil at the bottom. The small amounts of endosulfan that dissolve in water break down over time. Depending on the conditions in the water, endosulfan may break down within 1 day or it may take several months. Some endosulfan in surface water evaporates into air and breaks down. Animals, like fishes, that live in endosulfan-contaminated waters can build up endosulfan in their bodies. The amount of endosulfan in their bodies can be several times greater than in the surrounding water.

Presently there are no observable signs of endosulfan contamination in and around the waters of the ship such as fish kills or divers getting sick.

Despite these diving and recovery operations have been aborted. There are now efforts to assess exposures of divers and possible illness in case there was endosulfan exposure.

Fish and other marine life harvested from that area are now considered not fit for human consumption until complete tests indicate that there was no endosulfan contamination. DOH has set up disease surveillance to monitor other health effects of residents in the area.

For more information, contact the DOH National Epidemiology Center at 781-1686 to 90 local 1903 or 743-1937

From page A1

peared by Associate Justice Candida Corpus Montes, the high court en banc has barred Trillanes from attending Senate hearings while he has pending cases, affirming the decision of Makati City Regional Trial Court Branch 148 Judge Oscar Pimentel SC.

In his petition to overturn Pimentel's ruling, which was issued on July 2007, Trillanes informed his request to be allowed to attend all Senate functions, to have an office in his detention cell at the Marine Brig, Fort Bonifacio, and to receive members of his staff in his detention office.

He stressed that on Armed Forces Chief of Staff Gen. Hermogenes Esperon Jr. did not overrule the Marine Brig's decision allowing him to participate in the Senate sessions.

He also asked the court's permission to give interviews and statements to the media.

As a detainee who has yet to be convicted of coup d'etat and rebellion charges before the civilian and military courts, Trillanes said he should enjoy civil and political rights.

He added that there were enough precedents allowing liberal treatment of detainees, citing the cases of deposed President Joseph Estrada and former Moro secessionist Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) Gov. Nur Misuari.

Millions voted for him

Trillanes noted that he was not a flight risk, unlike ex-Rep. Romeo Jalosjos, who was convicted of raping a minor and tried to escape arrest.

Jalosjos was prevented from dispensing his legislative duties when he was sentenced despite the rape conviction.

Furthermore, Trillanes, who placed 11th in the 2007 senatorial race, stressed that to deny him his request would be tantamount to disenfranchising the millions of voters who supported him.

Trillanes is one of dozens of junior officers and enlisted personnel who took over Oakwood Premier apartment-hotel in Makati City on July 2003 to air their grievances against the Arroyo administration and to decry the alleged corruption in the military and the government.

Non-bailable offense

Last year, as the Arroyo administration was embroiled in a corruption scandal, Trillanes and other junior officers walked out of their Senate hearing and took over the Manila Peninsula Hotel in Makati City, where in a standoff, they decried the corruption in the government.

The high court denied Trillanes' request, saying that although the senator is not a convicted prisoner, the fact that he is an ex-officer in a nonbailable offense makes his "rights more limited than those of the public."

Citing a past decision, the high tribunal said: "All prisoners whether under preventive detention or serving final sentence cannot practice their profession nor engage in any business or occupation, or hold office, elective or appointive, while in detention."

It added that election to Congress may be sufficient in granting the petitioner more rights than the normal prisoner. The Makati Brig's recommendation was not binding on the court.

The high tribunal also said that Trillanes could not compare his case with those of Estrada and Misuari as his requests were not for emergency leaves.

Flight risk

Trillanes also proved to be a flight risk, despite his insistence that he isn't, the high court said, citing the Nov. 29, 2007 incident where Trillanes and other officers on trial went past the security forces and headed for another five-star hotel to issue anti-Arroyo statements.

The incident, dubbed this time as the 'Manila Pen Incident,' proves that petitioner's argument bites the dust. The risk that he would escape existed to be neither remote nor nil, as in fact, the cause for foreboding became real," the decision said.

The high tribunal also debunked Trillanes' disenfranchisement argument, saying the "election, or more precisely, reelection to office does not obliterate a criminal charge."

Misimpression

The senator's contention that a public offense cannot be presumed when the voters elected him to the Senate, they did so with full awareness of the limitations on his freedom of action and with the knowledge that he could only achieve such legislative results which he could accomplish within the confines of prison," the high court added.

REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
Department of Transportation and Communications
TOLL REGULATORY BOARD

NORTH LUZON EXPRESSWAY
ADJUSTMENT RATES (Exclusive of E-VAT)

US woman high ...

From page A1

them both beat.

Belvedd will be the only person on his block living inside a house built from the recycled parts of a fleeting 747 airliner.

After more than a year of delays, Belvedd's dream finally began to take off Thursday (Friday in Manila) as a large helicopter passed overhead with half of one of his house homer's wings dangling from a wire beneath its belly.

Exultant

"Woo-hoo! It's coming," an exultant Belvedd shouted as the jumped up and down and raised her hands over her head, to the applause of about three dozen family members and friends.

"A dream come true. A dream come true, finally!" said Belvedd, grinning from ear to ear. A baseball cap with the embroidered words "Wing Homer" held her tousled blond hair in place as the aramid atop a section of her 22 and 1/4 hectares of brush-covered hills and narrow canyons.

Recycled jumbo jet

It turns out you have to dream big if you want to find a jumbo built out of a retired jumbo jet that once ferried more than 500 people.

"There's been a big buildup to this moment that has involved getting approval from 17 government agencies and closing five freeways just to transport the pieces," architect David Hertz said.

Although Hertz and his firm, Studio of Environmental Architecture, are well-known in the industry for building "green" houses out of recycled and natural materials, this is the first house he ever put together from a gigantic jetsled aircraft whose wings alone measure about 510 square meters.

Client crazy enough

"I finally found a client crazy enough and willing enough to do it," he joked last year, not long after the old 747 he said Belvedd loved in an airplane junkyard in the Mojave Desert had been cut up and trucked more than 160 km to Camarillo, near Malibu. The pieces sat at the Camarillo Airport while grading and the laying of the foundation for Belvedd's future home was completed.

The rest of the plane's parts will be trucked up to Belvedd's property in helicopters costing $10,000 per hour, was the only way to get the 18-meter-long wing segments through the winding twists of the canyons above Malibu.

The airplane, priced about $200 million when it came off the assembly plant, was a bargain from the junkyard at $40,000.

The completed structure will include a 372-sq.-m. home and several other buildings, including guest houses, a caretaker's residence and a barn.

There will be an art studio made from a piece of fuselage, and part of the tail will become a viewing platform where visitors can gaze languidly across the hills toward the Pacific Ocean. The rear cone will be a recording studio, and one of the guest houses is the first-class lounge.

The wings will provide the roof.

Environmentalist

The goal is to use every piece of the plane, which is in keeping with Belvedd's sensibilities, both as an environmentalist and an admirer of art.

"I have to recycle, I love green houses and contemporary architecture, and I especially love nature and the natural environment," said Belvedd, whose family owns Mercedes-Benz dealerships in California and owns laughs when asked her age.

Her family and friends say they were not all that surprised when she told them what she had planned.

"I thought it was a little crazy but to live with my mom. She's quite a character," Belvedd's daughter, Elisha Shannon Belvedd said, laughing.

"My mom's definitely a hippie at heart. So living in the mountains of Malibu, in an all-sustainable house, that's perfect."

Next houses: A ship

Belvedd's home site has a history of eccentric structures. The area was previously owned by Tony Duquette, a designer of sets and costumes for films who filled what was once known locally as the Duquette Ranch with eccentric structures he built himself out of scrap materials from his movie sets.

Most of the structures were destroyed by a brush fire in the mid-1990s, but several spires and pagodas, constructed out of things like old oil barrels and sheet metal, remain.

Belvedd is keeping those and the large, decorative front gates that Duquette, who died in 1999, put in place.

But if she ever moves, she has already decided what her next home will be made out of.

"I'd like to use a ship," she said.

Sulpicio to give ₱200,000 each to victims' kin

By Allison W. Lopez

TO KNOW THAT THEY WERE "snatching grief with decisive action," Sulpicio Lines yesterday announced that it would give ₱200,000 to the relatives of all the "dead and the missing" persons in the passenger manifest of the ill-fated Princess of the Stars, regardless of whether the bodies have been recovered or identified.

Arthur Lim, the Sulpicio legal counsel, said the company decided to waive the one-year waiting period for which missing passengers will be compensated by releasing a total ₱144.8 million fund for the victims.

There were a total of 724 persons listed in the passengers' manifest of the Princess of the Stars.

What about others?

The lawyer did not say, however, what compensation would be forthcoming for those who survived the disaster or the relatives of the 111 crewmembers and 26 military aides on the ship.

Lim stressed that the compensation was meant to assist the families and was "not an admission of any legal liability."

The amount of ₱200,000, he said, was also in compliance with the minimum legal standard set by the Maritime Industry Authority.

"No shipping operator can operate unless he is willing to pay this amount to see are complying with the legal standard. Perhaps if there were only one or two or three victims, maybe we could go beyond the minimum standard. But remember there are 724 persons to what we can do is just comply with the standard as fixed by the regulator," he said.

Where to claim

All legal heirs of the listed victims have been asked to immediately go to the Sulpicio Manila office at Pier 12, North Harbor, or the Cebu office at the reclamation area to fill out a claim form. They must have the following documents: birth certificate and marriage contract, if applicable, of the victim, birth certificate and marriage contract of the claimant; valid cedula or government ID of claimant, sister's ID, and an affidavit of relationship of claimant to the victim.

"There is no need to hire the services of a lawyer because the claims will be acted upon with dispatch and with as simple documentation as possible," Lim said, adding that legal heirs cannot the spouse or child, if married or the parents, if single.

In less than a week

He said it would take the claimants "a week or less" to receive the money as long as the required documents are complete.

"Our only concern is double payment or fake claims. We will pay to the correct claimants. The documentation is intended to establish affiliation," said Lim.

To win ...

From page A1

However, it's not easy to buy trainer Freddie Roach's boast that Dito would need a miracle to conquer Pacquiao.

Dingaro de Asik for the highly favored Filipino boxing superhero.

For one, it was neither wise nor fair to claim that Pacquiao could not be bothered by a southpaw like Dito.

A flashback would reveal that the first knockout in Pacquiao's career came courtesy of a left hook to the chin by flustery Venezuelan, a southpaw.

Next, Pacquiao went down cockeyed after absorbing a stiff left straight to the tip of the chin from Medel Jkanada at the Cuneta Pilipinas, requiring barely seventeen flicks to every patented Flossy referee, which enabled the Pacquiao to get up and resume fighting.

It was also a thumping left to the rib cage that visibly jarred Pacquiao in the middle rounds of his last fight against Juan Manuel Marquez—a right that prompted an American analyst to state that "Pacquiao was not invincible after all."

Biggest danger

Above this, both combatants in the WBC lightweight title bout being left-handers, there's the ugly possibility of an errant hand hurt opening southpaw around over Pacquiao's helmet-eyebrow, the sort of accident that bothered him no end in his second fight with Marquez.

Still the biggest danger for Pacquiao is for him to be dragged and trapped in the fight inventor roadhouse, a favorite Dito trait.

Dito will, indeed, prove an open target for the sturdy, hard-hitting Pacquiao in the earlier rounds, but things could take a drastic turn if the defending WBC lightweight titlist manages to hang on and unleash the beast in the wind up rounds.

Power for power

If this happens, and there are solid signs Dito is capable surviving early punishment, the bout would be decided in a ring that would seem no wider than a telephone booth, or an ethnic, blood-smeared dungeon where boxing's Brontes sons are torn asunder.

Said Dito: "I will shock the world and beat Pacquiao on his own game, power for power. He's a great champion, but he's fighting in my division ... lightweight. I have worked too hard for this world title and I will not give it up to him."

Dito added: "I have always done pretty good against southpaws. I hit them, so I really should be all right."

Avoiding the bombs

Anyway, what loomed on the eve of the weigh-in was that a Pacquiao victory would hinge on his ability—more than on his firepower—to absorb and survive the patented body bombardment from Dito.

Body jaw Pacquiao has developed a dazzling footwork to avoid the bombs to the body, but there has been no assurance to the about Pacquiao's stamina resiliency.

In repute, the slower Dito, who could be a tackler for Pacquiao's patented jab-n-night solves, is indeed easy to hit in the open, although the 22-year-old WBC champ has an uncanny way of rolling with the punches to lessen their impact.

No-tomorrow brand

Pacquiao, on the other hand, has yet to unravel his unexplainable penchant of catching punches brutally viciously punishing to the limbs, instead of trying ways to deaden the fire and steel of coming blows.

The latter, tougher fighter will win and the Dito-Pacquiao bout promises to be a no-nonsense, no-holds-barred brand, a brutal contest on collision course, a sensational Pacific score and an almost silent sooner tagged as the modern-day Raging Bull. With a report from AFP

36 divers undergo battery of tests at military hospital

By Jeannette I. Andrade

SOME 36 DIVERS INVOLVED IN THE RESCUE, search and retrieval operations in Barangay Sabang, Baler, Aurora province, were yesterday taken straight to the Armed Forces of the Philippines Medical Center in Quezon City for a battery of tests.

An apologetic Transportation Undersecretary Maria Elena Bautista admitted to the divers that she had to withhold information on possible endosulfan poisoning from them.

"I was not able to tell you, there was a problem until now because it was classified information. I wanted to inform you, but I was restricted [from doing so]," she told the divers gathered at the auditorium of the hospital on V. Luna Avenue.

Bautista asked for patience from the divers and assured them that everything humanly possible was being done to facilitate the cure.

The 36 divers were among the first batch to undergo X-ray, blood sampling and ECG tests. Another 40 arrived a few hours after.

Of the 76, three are volunteer divers from the Coast Guard Auxiliary Group, including two retirees—Commodore Vicente Garcia and his diver Ensign Alexander Garcia. The rest are members of the Philippine Coast Guard, Philippine National Police Maritime Group, and Philippine Navy.

Silent heroes

"These are the silent heroes who have gone underwater for the past four or five days," Bautista said of the divers. "They are the ones we should be thanking."

She appealed to the families of the victims of the tragedy to give the divers credit for their unsung-but handling of the bodies.

Dr. Eric Tayag of the Department of Health's National Epidemiological Center said the divers would be checked for presence of toxicity in their systems.

"We want to make sure that none of you have been exposed to the pesticide. Some of you may have to be confined," Tayag told the divers.

Del Monte says endosulfan use has gov't OK

DEL MONTE PHILIPPINES INC. (DMPI) yesterday said the use of the pesticide endosulfan had been authorized by the Fertilizer and Pesticide Authority (FPA) and had been used by the company for decades with no reviewed health incident.

The company, which exports fruits and vegetables in the Philippines under the Del Monte brand, issued the statement in response to the announcement of the National Disaster Coordinating Council that a cargo of the restricted pesticide had been loaded into the MV Princess of the Stars.

"While this cargo is owned by Del Monte Philippines Inc., it was still en route for delivery to Del Monte and was therefore outside its control at the time of the accident," the company said.

Princess of Paradise

"DMPI unanimously monitors the movement of delicate materials such as medications," it said.

DMPI said that without its knowledge and consent, ship owner Sulpicio Lines Inc. loaded the endosulfan in the Princess of the Stars instead of the 989 Princess of Paradise, the supposed appointed vessel for the cargo.

"Upon learning that our cargo was loaded in the ill-fated [vessel], we immediately informed the FPA," DMPI said.

It said it was "in constant touch with the FPA and other government agencies to ensure that any and all action will be taken to avoid and prevent any damage."

"We want to assure the public that we in DMPI are responsible corporate citizens and we are just as concerned with the environment and are actively assisting the authorities in addressing this pressing situation," it added.

According to DMPI, the endosulfan originated from a supplier in Israel and was packed and shipped in accordance with international shipping standards for cargoes of this type.

It said Sulpicio Lines had been fully apprised of the nature of the cargo because all required documents were submitted, including the material safety data sheet from the supplier.

The DMPI plantation in Bukidnon is described as the largest and most integrated pineapple plantation in the world. It has been the leading exporter of processed pineapple products for nearly 80 years.

One of best

Its epidemiologist of the Bureau of Food and Drugs (BFAD) in Northern Mindanao said DMPI has not violated any law since it started carrying operations in Sitio Colorado.

"So far, Del Monte has been one of the best companies under my jurisdiction in their compliance with our policies," said Dr. Ray Mendoza of BFAD 10. Reports from Amy R. Remo in Manila and Ida Cecilia Bellgica in Dagupan de Oro City

Toxic cargo stops search

From page A1

divers. "Being a doctor, I do not want to expose the people to risks. We will use normal goods for now, and I will on government agencies to please send local ones. We can longer have local sources because we can't find any that are safe. Everything were destroyed by the storm."

In Manila, Health Secretary Francisco Duque warned against eating fish and other seafood caught in the waters off Bondoc peninsula.

The DOH's latest advisory is in direct contrast to its Thursday announcement that fish and other seafood harvested in the area were safe to eat despite the presence of dead bodies.

"Fish and other marine life harvested from that area are now considered not fit for human consumption until complete tests establish that they are safe for human consumption," Duque said in a statement.

The cargo of endosulfan, a restricted pesticide used in pineapple plantations, is in 400 25-liter boxes stored in a 40-foot container van, Sbst President Rodolfo Reyes said in a press briefing at the Department of National Defense early yesterday.

Dr. Castro feared that Sulpicio Lines did not inform authorities of the cargo of endosulfan when the ship sank.

He said that had the government known of the presence of the pesticide, it would not have sent divers or rescuers bodies from the ship.

He said the cargo was owned by Del Monte Philippines Inc. and was to have been transported from Manila to Cebu and then to Cagayan de Oro, and finally by truck to Bukidnon where the multinational firm has its pineapple plantation.

Dr. Castro chaired an emergency meeting of the National Disaster Coordinating Council (NDCC) after it was informed that a container van with pesticide endosulfan had been buried at sea along with other cargo and the remains of passengers and crew of the Princess of the Stars.

Reyes, divers were airlifted yesterday to Manila as soon as the patient order was given, Dr. Castro said. However, reports from chief of the Philippine defense said on the phone.

The divers were to undergo rapid medical evaluation, to determine whether they had been exposed to toxic substances after days of rescue and retrieval operations.

The Princess of the Stars' cargo manifest showed that it carried the pesticide when it left Manila for Cebu on June 28. PCG then Admiral Wilfredo Tamayo told reporters on board the highest bodies on the lifeguard ship.

"We are just following the orders of the NDCC. Operations are temporarily suspended until ... we are sure that the chemical will no longer spread and there is no more danger to our divers," he said.

Tamayo said water samples from inside the ship owned by Sulpicio Lines Inc. were taken to Manila late Thursday for testing levels coming.

Reading the results, he said, "the best option is for us to maximize the safety of our divers."

Diving operations will continue once it is shown that the pesticide cargo is intact, he said.

A diver complained of itchiness after going underwater on Thursday, according to Tamayo. But he said it would be premature to connect the incident to the hazardous cargo.

Retrieval operations were stopped after 63 other bodies believed to be those of passengers of the sunken ship were found off Burias Island in Masbate.

The bodies, some of which were torn wearing life vests marked with the ship's name, were taken aboard a Philippine Navy ship.

Tamayo assured the families awaiting word on their loved ones that the PCG had begun planning contingencies to proceed with retrieval operations.

Mayor's warning

On shore in Sitio Calitongan, Baler, which is nearest the shipwreck, Mayor Tarsilgino assured residents about the possibility toxic wastes and advised them not to eat fish caught in the area.

"The sea is very dangerous. You should not fish, eat fish from the sea, swim or dive. Please cooperate so we won't have more problems," she said.

Tarsilgino, who hastened to add, his concern is upon hearing of the dangerous cargo, also advised those who had just dived or swam in the waters as who had consumed just caught fish to undergo to a checkup at the town's health station.

She issued the same advice to two fishermen that she spotted offshore while she was aboard a speedboat back to town.

Tarsilgino's directive dampened down on the interest livelihood of fishermen Ramon Del Prado Jr. and Nestor Sicilar.

For days, the two men had been running from ferrying to the shipwreck locals curious to see the mishap site and rescue of the media covering retrieval operations.

"Nine days we can't fish because some scare somewhere. But now that they gave this order, it will be harder for us," said Nilay Ramon.

Disease surveillance

Health Secretary Duque said authorities were closely monitoring the divers and the residents of Bondoc to determine if the cargo of endosulfan had contaminated the waters.

He said the Department of Health had set up "disease surveillance" to monitor any health effects" on residents.

Duque said that as of yesterday afternoon, health authorities had noted no "observable signs" of endosulfan contamination in the area.

He said no diver had yet claimed experiencing symptoms of endosulfan poisoning, but fish kills had been reported.

Elsie the Princess of the Stars unit, residents of Bondoc and nearby provinces have been affecting in eat fish caught near the disaster area for fear of contamination from the dead bodies.

Duque accompanied Lt. Commander Rafael Jackson Bellew, chief of the PCG Station Environmental Unit, chemicals, fisheries, and with other sectors to varying ways.

Thus, it will be hard to tell the pesticide's effect on marine life in the waters near the ship, he told the business in Sibuyan.

No certification

At the press briefing that Vice President Dr. Castro called, Transportation Undersecretary Maria Elena Bautista, who is currently heads Task Force MV Princess of the Stars, said Sulpicio Lines had failed to secure a permit from the PCG and to declare that it had "hazardous material" among its cargo.

"Nobody asked permission from the Coast Guard, and there was no certification issued by DA. According to our rules, it is prohibited to load hazardous materials in a passenger vessel," Bautista said.

Dr. Castro said: "I was very clear" that this was another violation of the dispensers.

"We heard that [the pesticide] was placed together with other cargo, like tomatoes and other food items," he said, but added that the report was subject to confirmation.

How the gov't knew

Bautista said a team of local and foreign experts employed with preventive gear was expected to examine the ship's wreck to see how the hazardous materials were preserved.

She said the government learned of the ship's worn cargo only after Del Monte sent a letter to the Fertilizer and Pesticide Authority on June 24 informing the FPA of the fact.

By then, divers had rescue and retrieval operations had been underway to the ship for at least two days.

Direct from Del Monte

Upon receipt of Del Monte's letter, the FPA informed the Department of Transportation and Communications.

Bautista said the DOTC received the FPA's letter on Thursday, detached at the FPA's letter was two letters from Del Monte—one addressed to the FPA informing the agency that the authorized chemical was in the ship and it had sank, and the other to Sulpicio Lines, reminding it to declare the toxic substance in its ship and to take precautions for the environment and the people in the vicinity of the sea mishap.

Bautista said the DOTC immediately called up the Office of Civil Defense, which in turn convened a meeting with reps from the DOH, the FPA, and the University of the Philippines.

The NDCC then decided to halt search, rescue and retrieval operations and to go on to diving.

Asked if a spillage of endosulfan from the sunken ship would lead to a catastrophe, Dr. Lyn Pangilinan of the UP National Science Research Center, whose team assess an aircraft, it is the. What will the F-16s do for the recovery [of bodies]?" Hinson had asked.

Suspicions

Leftist groups in the Philippines were suspicious about the decision to send the battleship group to the Sibuyan Sea, Reuters said.

They claimed it was meant to show military powers to Asia, like China and North Korea, that the United States was capable of rapidly deploying its military forces in the Asian region at any given time in response any threat to the US-Philippine relationship.

"How sure is Malacañang that there will be no nuclear weapons inside Ronald Reagan?" Fernando Hicap of the Bayan group, Hernandez said.

The Philippine Constitution bans the presence of nuclear weapons in the country. It makes no explicit statement about nuclear-powered vessels.

The US Embassy has said that the only purpose will support exercise, security, which is being carried out by Philippine and American in the waters of the typhoon.

Air Secretary Gilday 10 visit ends on Saturday. She is expected to return to Manila on June 30.

Defense Secretary Jesus Dureza said that Ms Arroyo would fly to typhoon-ravaged Iloilo a day after the cabinet-level meeting. With reports from Norma Dollaga Jr., Inquirer Visayas

IN THE KNOW

The deadly effects of endosulfan

ENDOSULFAN IS A HIGHLY TOXIC artificial pesticide used on food crops like grains, tea, fruits and vegetables, and on cash crops such as tobacco and cotton. It is also used as a wood preservative.

The pesticide, a cream- or brown-colored solid that sometimes takes the form of crystals or flakes, is stored in bottles and cans. It is not inflammable and does not dissolve easily in water. It attaches to soil particles floating in water and do not dissolve at the bottom of bodies of water.

Some animals living in endosulfan-contaminated waters suffer from kidney, liver, or brain damage and a reduced ability to fight off infections.

Ingesting large amounts of endosulfan by eating the meat of contaminated animals and drinking contaminated water can cause severe poisoning in humans and lead to their deaths.

Humans are also in danger of breathing contaminated air and having skin contact with endosulfan-treated soil.

According to the US Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, endosulfan presents the human central nervous system from working properly and causes hyperactivity, nausea, dizziness, headache and convulsions.

Linked to birth defects

The Pesticide Action Network North America (Panna), which advocates the use of ecologically sound alternatives to pesticides, says that endosulfan has been linked to birth defects.

In the Indian state of Kerala, many residents are suffering from physical deformities, cancers and disorders of the central nervous system, which are said to have been caused by the decades-long aerial spraying of endosulfan by the government-owned Plantation Corp. of Kerala.

Pesticides intended for the fields given rainwater's careless plantations reportedly leached into the soil and contaminated the residents' drinking water.

Ban lifted in 1995

Because of the high incidence of health problems in the area, Kerala imposed an indefinite ban on endosulfan in 2000.

The Philippines' fertilizer and Pesticide Authority banned endosulfan in 1995, but lifted the ban two years later to combat a decades' disease that threatened the country's pineapple export industry.

According to Panna, endosulfan is banned in Bahrain, Belize, Cambodia, Colombia, Germany, Kuwait, the Netherlands, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, South Korea, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Syria, Tonga and United Arab Emirates.

Endosulfan is severely restricted in Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Finland, Honduras, Indonesia, Indonesia, Iran, Japan, Korea, Kazakhstan, Lithuania, Norway, Panama, Russia, Serbia & Montenegro, Thailand, Taiwan, the United Kingdom and Venezuela, Panna said. Cyril C. Enumerio Inquirer Research

Management and Control Center (www.mcc.ph) the offender/s.

"We are told to take precautionary measures since it is highly toxic and hazardous chemical to begin with ... and because we do not want this to reach the ocean-our resources, for us to learn and contaminate our environment," Hingpadlan said.

Finger-pointing

Neither the PCG nor Sulpicio Lines is taking the blame.

Lt. Commander Armand Balilo, the PCG spokesperson, said Sulpicio Lines had not informed the agency of the endosulfan cargo. He admitted, however, that as a general rule, all passenger ship should not carry toxic cargo.

Yet their (Sulpicio's) obligations to file an application that they have hazardous cargo. We would have inspected first to see where it was stored, if it was properly secured, and if it was marked, before we [issued] a permit," Balilo told reporters.

He also said endosulfan was a tightly-controlled chemical substance, and that only Del Monte and Dole Philippines were registered users in the country.

Sulpicio Lines Inc. vice president Edgar Go-Sarmiento was unavailable for the media. But lawyer Maria Victoria Lim-Florida, one of the company's spokespersons for the Board of Marine Inquiry (BMI), said it was the first time she had heard that the Princess of the Stars was carrying such a cargo. With reports from Kimberlie Aliva, Jerome Aning and Michael Lim Ubac

UP to host int'l conference on Philippine studies July 23-26

SIX INTERNATIONAL conference that will examine Philippine realities and chart new directions in a global era will be held on July 23-26 at the Philippine Social Science Center, Commonwealth Avenue, Quezon City, and at the Ateneo de Manila University (Ateneo), Loyola Heights, Quezon City.

About 285 papers will be presented in 72 sessions by some of the best Filipino and international scholars at the 8th International Conference on Philippine Studies (ICOPHIL), which is one of the major events included in the University of the Philippines' Centennial celebrations.

The conference, which has as its theme "Philippine Studies for the 21st Century: New Meanings, Critiques, and Trajectories," aims to provide a forum on developments and discussions for scholars engaged in research on the field.

Since 1989, the hospital has been held every four years on an international basis, alternating its venue between the Philippines and Southeast Asia.

The 8th hospital will be hosted by the Philippine Studies Association (PSA) in conjunction with the International Board for Philippine Studies Conference currently based at the Center for Philippine Studies at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa.

The co-owners of the 8th hospital are PSA president Bernardita R. Churchill and hospital chair Belinda A. Aquino, with the Philippine Social Science Council serving as secretariat.

It is cosponsored by the National Commission for Culture and the Arts, National Historical Institute, Commission on Filipino Overseas, Gilbert Adams Center for Philippine Studies at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa, and the Office of the Mayor of Quezon City.

Inquiries may be directed to icophil@pssc.org.ph, (632) 9200071, (632) 436-1928, or rbchurch@lhpbx.mail.com. For registration details, visit www.pssc.org.ph/icophil.

FRENCH DONATION
French Ambassador Gerard Chesnel hands over the $1 01,000 donation of the government of France to Sen. Richard Gordon, chair of the Philippine National Red Cross, for the recovery victims of the capsized Princess of the Stars and the relief of other victims of Typhoon "Frank." At yesterday's turnover ceremonies at the Villamor Air Base, Chesnel relayed to President Macapagal-Arroyo the expression of condolences and sympathy from French President Nicolas Sarkozy. "It is with deep sorrow that I learned of the heavy consequences brought about by typhoon Fengshen (Frank) to the Philippines, particularly the tragic sinking of the ship MV Princess of the Stars. I wish to extend the support of France to the Filipino people at this time of hardship," Sarkozy said in his letter.

ARMM voting machines easy to use, says Comelec

By Kristine L. Alave

DESPITE THE WIDESPREAD ILLITERACY IN the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), the Commission on Elections is confident that voters will adapt easily to the voting machines that will be deployed in the country's first ever automated elections.

"While it is a very important matter, we don't feel that it's going to be a significant issue," Comelec spokesperson Jerome Jimenez said in a press briefing yesterday.

Jimenez said the machines that would be used in the Aug. 11 regional elections are "intuitive."

Voters, he noted, don't even have to write the names of their candidates in the ballots.

ARMM voters will use the optical mark reader (OMR) machines, for example, will only have to shade the oval space beside their candidate. The ballot will then be fed in to a scanning machine that will tally and transmit the votes electronically to regional and national scanning centers.

The OMR will be deployed in Basilan, Lanao del Sur, Shariff Kabunsuan, Sulu and Tawi-Tawi provinces.

The Direct Recording Equipment (DRE), on the other hand, uses a touch-screen technology that will instantly record the voter's choices. Around 5,500 DRE machines will be deployed in Maguindanao for the polls.

"It is faster and easier to use the automated voting machines than it is to write the individual names of candidates on the ballots," Vince Thron, spokesperson of Smartmatic-Sole Technology, the provider of the DRE and the company in charge of the transmission of the election results.

Some ARMM leaders recently expressed fears that ARMM residents would not be ready to use the automated voting machines.

Some fared voiced doubts on the introduction of new technology, saying the region's high illiteracy rate could be a problem.

The warriors region, considered the country's poorest, has lagged in terms of literacy, compared with other regions.

According to the 2003 National Statistics Office's survey on literacy and numeracy, ARMM has the lowest functional literacy rate in the country, at 62.9 percent.

But Comelec chairman Abdu Aga Ali expressed confidence that the voters would cope with the new technologies. If the voters know how to operate a cell phone, they will have no problem with the machines, Ali said.

Jimenez also disclosed that the Comelec, along with its kins' groups, has launched an extensive voters' education program to prepare voters for the elections.

The Comelec has trained 46 trainers to train and operate the DRE and the OMR. The 46 volunteers will then train election officers in ARMM in July.

Avante International, the DRE provider, said it has tapped the Association of Private Colleges-ARMM in its information campaign.

"That way, we would be able to reach the grassroots areas in the five provinces that we would be deployed," Leo Quevedo, Avante project manager said.

Avante is scheduled to deploy 316 automated counting machines, 332 scanners, 332 laptops, and 316 printers for 6,000 precincts, he added.

Smartmatic-Sole, on the other hand, said it would establish practice booths in schools and municipalities so let voters get familiar with the technology.

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OPINION

Embarrassing

EDITORIAL

A DMINISTRATION OFFICIALS PROBABLY SAW nothing wrong with it, but President Macapagal-Arroyo's determination—and ultimately feeble—pursuit of Sen. Barack Obama made a number of Filipinos cringe in embarrassment.

The President was originally reported to have a meeting with the Democratic Party's presumptive nominee for president last Wednesday in New York, but the site was later changed to Washington, D.C., a convenience change for Ms Arroyo who was winding up her official visit to the US capital on this day. Wednesday came and went, but there was no Obama. (He was said to be on the other side of the United States, in Hollywood, attending a fund-raising event.) That night Ms Arroyo left for New York, where she later learned Obama would meet with her in Washington Thursday. There was talk Ms Arroyo might skip some of her scheduled activities in New York, including a meeting with foreign diplomats assigned to the United Nations, to fly back to Washington for the meeting with Obama. But again the meeting was called off. As a consolation, the senator from Illinois on Thursday gave her 30 minutes of his time—on the telephone.

Thus, the President of the Philippines ended up looking like the pesky little fly that candied to be thrown sweet nothings just so she would get out of the way of somebody who is (or even president (yet) of his country. If Ms Arroyo and her advisers didn't find it improper or even demeaning to be so inordinately eager to see Obama, there are others who did. The President cannot behave like a love-struck teenager, willing and ready to do everything and drop anything, including her dignity, just to see her idol.

It is hard to believe that Obama or his people could be so insensitive and undiplomatic as to call off or for last minute a scheduled meeting with a foreign head of state. That simply isn't done, except if there is an emergency or serious someone wants to signal extreme displeasure. What most likely happened was that arrangements were made for a possible meeting and nothing definitive was agreed upon, but some preemptive Palace officials took the meeting as a done deal. That, on the eve of the President's departure, the Philippine consul general in San Francisco, Ambassador Maximino Paynor Jr., announced that Obama and his Republican rival Sen. John McCain had "shown interest" in meeting with Ms Arroyo and that indeed the meeting had been confirmed.

But after finding out that no firm date had been set for the Arroyo-Obama meeting, why didn't the President's men just hide their disappointment instead of continuing to talk for a meeting? Better still, why didn't Ms Arroyo simply cut her trip short and go home to attend to the many things needing her attention in the face of the double and destructive wounded by Typhoon Pirante? Nobody would have noticed this misadventure dealing with the Obama camp. (If that was what it was) had she simply flown back to personally take charge of emergency relief operations.

She already got what she wanted from the visit: a reaffirmation of her friendship with US President George W. Bush and high praise from him for her campaign against terrorism. But apparently she wanted to blunt criticism about fleeing as relatives with a lame-duck president by starting new personal relationships with his likely successors. She didn't quite succeed (at least as far as Obama is concerned), and instead embarrassed herself and the nation.

Almost over

FOREIGN COMMENT

Z IMBABWE IS NOW PAYING THE PRICE FOR WESTERN AND African indifference about a champion of independence (President Robert Mugabe) who became distrustful and ascared the country into the ditch.

No one spoke up in time. Neighboring African countries are still having trouble speaking out strongly enough. Thus apples, not in the hand, to South Africa, whose many Black Zimbabwe have sought refuge. Many of them suffer violence from poor South Africans who see them as threat to their jobs. ...

The only hope is that the Southern African Development Community institut...ion stronger measures against the Mugabe regime and lay the groundwork for the time after he is gone.

In some time or another, his time will be over. That time is approaching fast. —*Afrimpostor* (Yola, Borno)

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Risk and disaster threshold

PUBLIC LIVES

Randy David

IN ALL THE YEARS I HAVE TRAVELED, I HAVE taken pleasure in more often than I have taken boats. Yet, I have always believed that boats are safer than planes. It is best catches fire, or its engine stalls, there is usually time enough to maneuver to a safe area, or to get out a life boat and bail out before the vessel sinks. There are rarely not available to passengers strapped to their seats inside an aircraft. Airplane passengers are thrown how to put on life vests in the "suddenly event" of a crash landing on water, or how to breathe through oxygen masks if there should be a drastic change in cabin pressure. They are told where the exits are, and how the doors may be opened. But no airline provides its passengers with parachutes.

Perhaps most people think exactly the way I do, are expert ships to be safer than planes. That is why the disasters that befall us most—the ones we cannot forget—are those involving the sinking of boats rather than the crashing of airplanes. This has less to do with the number of people who perish in such disasters than with our general psychological unpreparedness for the inherent risk.

The other night, my wife and I were in a Philippine Airlines evening flight from Greece to Manila. I was looking at the grim news photos at the tragic sinking of the Sulpicio Lines' Princess of the Stars, that day, the "Nation must hold" says Bashed, and we were told that we would be experiencing some air turbulence. I was momentarily and instinctively alarmed at the extra distress was soon behind our seats.

I usually don't read or pay much attention to safety instruction videos. I am content to scroll over the on-flight Discovery style magazine of the safety features of the aircraft, and I begin to imagine how we would make our way to the emergency exits if the lights were out and there was a need to immediately leave the plane. The snorkel thought of the plane and death because of the water. But as I reach land ing to the screen haunted me as I struggled to take a nap. I pressed the water slowly seeping into the pressurized aircraft, and wondered what would happen if someone opened the emergency exit doors. How easy would it be to open them, and what manners hide while everyone else in their inflated life were grouped in the dark for the way out? I made up my mind that it wasn't going to be easy at all, even assuming that the plane would not break into pieces as soon as it crashed into the water.

If we always stopped to reflect on the risks we take in our daily lives, we would probably be paralyzed. We would be asking if the risk is worth taking, or whether we have weighed the alternatives. Yet we live this as a natural. Thus, our default mode is one of trust—except in those rare instances when we find ourselves trying out something extraordinary—like bungee jumping or skydiving.

If daily behavior is part of your way of life, you have no choice but to tolerate a certain risk, reduction into your daily routine. When I resumed riding motorcycles in 2004, after a gap of more than 20 years, I realized that taking out an accident insurance for myself and my bike would not minimize the risks of a disastrous accident. More important than all the insurance in the world was a reliable helmet. Moreover, each time I ride my bike, I made sure I was dressed for a fall no matter how close my destination was. I decided early on that if I could not stay away from motorcycles, I should learn how to ride and handle one safely.

This disarm consciousness of risk is not something that citizens of four-wheeled vehicles normally build into their driving habits. Long after seatbelts became obligatory in cars, Filipinos always refused to use them. They were not impressed by the high incidence of fatal accidents involving drivers and passengers unprotected by seatbelts. What finally got them into the seatbelt habit were not the statistics but the stiff fines that awaited violators of the law.

Inconsistency to risk may perhaps be seen as the nervous system's way of keeping focused and minimizing distractions. If you're on holiday, you would not want to spend your time thinking of the dangers that lurk around you. Therefore, instinctively you choose to forget you. As dinosaurs as they may be in the mood of relaxation that an airline or a ship may wish to foster, it is the current's unpleasant task to constantly bring up those precautionary messages. Indeed, in international passenger ships, every note, outboard exception, is required to list out and participate in a collective drill for emergencies. You are asked to proceed to a pre-assigned section of the ship's deck, present on a life vest and stand to for muster. You are instructed on how to get into a life boat should the need arise. In every cabin, you find a map of the major exits and simple instructions on what to do in an emergency.

The improbable does not happen, and you emerge from the ship without even finding any sensational for this kind of thrill or information. And not the crew of every passenger boat will do it over and over, and will not compromise on these necessary routines. Regulatory bodies strictly monitor compliance with the safety standards, whose utility is tested only in the unlikely event of an emergency at sea.

We never seem to learn any lessons from these disasters. Most of our boats are as unsafe and as inadequately equipped to handle large volumes of passengers as ever. Their owners know this, but they would rather not tell anybody of the risks. In a society marked by chronic insecurity, the public's disaster threshold is high, and so this latest tragedy will soon be forgotten.

• • •

(Comments to public.lives@gmail.com

A parody of literature

GET REAL

Solita Collas-Monsod

PHILIPPINE AMERICAN FRIENDSHIP DAY? What a farce. What exists between the two countries is a parody, a travesty, of the give and take that characterizes a friendship between two parties. They give us crap, and we take it, and that is essentially what exists.

The list of such instances is a long one, one of the more recent being how the provisions of the RP-US Visiting Forces Agreement were twisted beyond all recognition, resulting in the midnight transfer of a US soldier from a Filipino jail to the US Embassy, in direct defiance of the sovereignty, and the integrity of the Philippine government. That, of course, there were the direct interferences by the US government in Philippine politics, again with the complicity of our governments, putting in, in office those who were accommodating and keeping out those who dared to be critical. And who can forget that provision to the Bell Trade Act—the one so-called "independence," mind you, which required the Philippine government to get the permission of the US president before changing its exchange rate?

The recent visit of President Macapagal-Arroyo to the United States has highlighted what is arguably the endless pout World War II example not only of one-sided American government behavior toward the Filipino people but also of the way Filipinos react to it. The following material was taken from the National Federation of Filipino American Associations and the American Coalition for Filipino Veterans Inc.):

In July of 1941, then US President Franklin Roosevelt ordered 11 soldiers inducting members of the entire Commonwealth Army of the Philippines into the US military service, making them members of the United States Armed Forces in the Far East (USAFFE). Nine days later, Roosevelt had to do this, because when the axis broke out, there were less than 30,000 US regular troops in the Philippines. Roosevelt's order added at least 120,000 more, who then faced the almost 300,000 on-coming Japanese forces. In other words, the United States relied primarily on Filipino soldiers, scouts and guerrillas to resist the overwhelming forces.

In 1942, the US Attorney General proclaimed that the Filipino soldiers inducted into the US military service by President Roosevelt were "in active service in the land and naval forces of the United States."

Under the 1944 GI Bill of Rights, these Filipino military personnel were at first included in consideration for benefits, confirming their veteran status.

In September 1945, the Federal Bureau of Veterans Affairs stated that those personnel were eligible for US veterans benefits, thus reconfirming their veteran status.

How today? And it is not as if the Filipinos military personnel and guerrillas organized after the USAFFE surrendered) were doubtless. Their role was lauded as "heroic and substantial" to enabling the United States to succeed in its war effort. Literature have opined that the defeat of the Japanese military in the Philippines was the start of Japan's road to final defeat.

And that is the thanks they got.

In February of 1946 (even before we were granted our independence), President Harry Truman signed the Rescission Act. This stripped those same lauded soldiers of their US veteran status. Not only that, among non-US citizen veterans of the US military that came from 46 countries, only the Filipinos were stripped of their US veteran status! How's that for repayment for courageous and honorable service? They give us crap and we take it? How's that for parity?

Because if the Philippine government made a promise at the time, I have yet to hear of it, or read of it. Of course, at the time we were still a commonwealth, and at that time, outpleading against the United States was unthinkable. Some of us are convinced there are still many to ally ignoring the fact that if they hadn't been in the Philippines in the first place, Japan would probably not have attacked us. (This is the considered opinion of the famous Col. Siebert Ramsay, who as a lieutenant formed the guerrilla known as General Lanoza.)

And 62 years later, the number of veterans down to about 15 percent of their original number, those brave and patient souls are still waiting for what should have been rightfully theirs in the first place.

How much will it cost the United States to give these veterans their due? Depending on the allowances, the range is between $18 million and $300 million a year—an amount that declines, of course, as natural laws its course and the numbers of veterans dwindle by another.

Congress first assured in the $405 million per day that is estimated to be the cost of running the Iraq war (Ella from the San Francisco Chronicle). But maybe that is not a fair comparison. How about if we compare this to the $52 billion Jan 2008 project that was the estimated cost of the physical damage to the Philippines wrought by World War II (correction: what Ramsay said, and which we're at it, our million Filipinos died during both the Japanese and the Americans attacks)?

Dr Steven another comparison. In 1950 prices, the value of that $52 billion worth of damages was about $7 billion. A year later, Japan agreed to pay us area less than one-tenth of that amount. The "aid" of the United States? Certainly we received it—but to those supplies. But the United States forgot to pay, and we did not demand, not for the use of Clark and Subic—not a penny of it.

Philippine American Friendship Day? Why did kind of friend, we don't need any enemies.

Where's a great place to work? (2)

LAST WEEK, I BEGAN TO DISCUSS SG SHOUTing SWS study on 21 potential country destinations for overseas Filipino workers, based on the 1998 Survey on Overseas Contract Workers of the International Social Survey Program (ISSP). This multinational survey still as what scientific samples of several hundred hired workers in each involving countries that is conducted.

Those countries are Australia, Canada, Israel, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, the United States, and 14 latter-improving nations in Europe for comparisons in the Philippines. The term "overseas" in this volumes means the average of those countries in the ISSP sampling, with the exception of "this, worked per week, and certain deficiencies in working life. In so as now take up some difficulties and sacrifices that workers say they experience. Other things equal, the countries with the lowest of such deficiencies may be the best places to work.

Difficulties of the static job

The experience of on-hour difficulties in work is often, but not always, higher in the Philippines than overseas. The ISSP survey provides six questions on the experience of long workweeks other than their work (2) exhausting, (3) physically hard, (4) dangerous, and (5) stressful.

1. Always or often exhausted when coming home from work. This is felt by 48 percent of hired workers in the Philippines, or 10 points above the overseas average of 38.

The exhaustion rate is almost as high in Slovenia (47), and Israel, South Korea, Australia and France (all 41). Places with the least exhaustion are Sweden (22), Norway (23), Canada (26), the Belgian territory of ISSP does overseas in Flanders only). Elsewhere, it ranges from 30 to 41.

2. Always or often have to do hard physical work. This is a complaint of 59 percent of hired workers in the Philippines, or 15 points above the overseas average of 22 percent.

In the high end, again, is South Korea (54), then, other things equal, it is a place that OFWs are advised to avoid. At the low end, ranging from 15 to 18, are the Netherlands, Canada, Japan, Slovenia, and Flanders. All others range from 20 to 28.

3. Always or often work in dangerous conditions. This was cited by 31 percent of hired workers in the Philippines. It is double the overseas average of only 12 percent. In all 21 countries of the study, Filipino workers have the most complaints of dangerous work.

The country most cited by workers for dangerous conditions of work is Spain (31 percent). Those least cited are the Netherlands (6), Ireland Kingdom (7), Norway (8), and Flanders and France (9). In other words, these four are generally the safest countries in which to work.

4. Always or often find the work stressful. On the other hand, stress on account of work is the most difficulty among the four examined by the survey, that is true overseas in the Philippines (33 percent) than overseas. The overseas average is 30 percent.

The countries most cited for work-related stress are Sweden (42), South Korea (40), and, Israel (39). Those cited for work stress the least are the same three for OFWs to avoid, or at least to psychologically prepare themselves for, when it comes to work-related stress.

Those least cited for stress are New Zealand (21), Ireland (22), the Netherlands (27), Japan (28), and Flanders and Britain (29). Flanders and Britain are tied at 33. In 14 of the 21 countries, the proportion of complaints about stress is greater than in the Philippines.

Easy-does-it-made-for-employers

The ISSP Work Orientations module has a battery of three so-called "Agree-Disagree" items that are indicative of the workers' willingness to make sacrifices for their employers. The highest is the figure score of Filipino workers compared to that of their counterparts, the most desirable to overseas employers would OFWs.

The ISSP findings from this battery of test statements indicate that Filipinos would be quite compliant to the personal workers in the 21 prospective workplaces for OFWs.

1. "I am willing to work harder than I have to in order to help the firm or organization I work [or succeed." Agreement among Filipino workers is 71 percent, 11 points above the overseas average of 60 percent.

2. "I am proud to be working for my firm or organization." Agreeing to this statement suggests a willingness to associate personal pride to one's employer as a substitute for higher pay or lower perks. The agreement among Filipino workers is 93 percent, 10 points above the overseas of 83 percent.

The only countries with higher scores than the Philippines are Switzerland (98), Ireland (91), and, again in the far end, the United States (88). At the low end are Finland (47), and South Korea (48). Other countries range from 60 to 71.

3. "I would turn down another job that offered more money in order to stay with this organization." Agreement in the Philippines is 34 percent, or about the overseas average of 29 percent.

The only countries with higher scores than the Philippines are Switzerland (60), Ireland (51), and, again in the far end, the United States (61). At the low end are Finland (47), and South Korea (48). Other countries range from 10

After the probes, back to usual

"LEVY GROUNDS SUSPECT ships: Inquirer.net," December, 6/29/08) Grounding the ships to detain their seafarers calls up of course probe that Sulpicio Lines does comply with standards. I have taken Sulpicio ships on several trips and I have always found them comfortable and reasonable.

The issue in the sinking of the "pride" of Sulpicio off Mindoro is not the ship's seaworthiness. Neither is the tragedy attributable to Sulpicio's maintenance system. There was a final error in judgment—the ship taking a route in disregard of more sensible maritime savvy, considering the bad weather conditions.

The fact that other passenger ships took a safer route (or postponed their departure) after reports of refuge shows that the captain or the owners of the ill-fated ship considered (related?) other factors when they made the decision that led to the "route of death."

Having had three previous sailings in the last 21 years before this latest, Sulpicio should have become the most cautious shipping line when it comes to studying risk factors versus benefits and making good business decisions alongside safety considerations for passengers and crew.

Many of us expect LETTERS to prove yet and beg the headlines of front pages and TV/radio coverage, and even eventually the downs—leaving the Sulpicio officers and seamen free of any liability and all will be as calm as the sea after a storm.

Our condolences to the families affected and we pray for the safety of all ships in the high seas.

—HECTOR MALAC,
rienekmalac@yahoo.com

NBDB doing share to improve quality of RP school textbooks

WE EXPRESS OUR DISAPPOINTment in the unbalanced banner story on "straw-filled books," which was published in the June 17 issue, headed by Fernando del Mundo. (Inquirer, 6/19/08) The story stated that, according to Antonio Calipio Go, "nothing has been done by the NBDB [National Book Development Board] on the case" of the allegedly straw-filled books. NBDB exists to screen and English. It is understandable that the business did not get our side.

While Republic Act 8047 did not make the NBDB a regulatory agency...and our country under Ghana, has no textbook problem...the NBDB has the right and mechanisms by which it is able to exercise an effective form of moral authority over book publishers registered with it. In all the much famous, the NBDB makes known its procedures and findings regarding textbooks and its quarterly newsletter.

These mechanisms, like the NSDB's Textbook Review Service, have led to the revision and improvement of several textbooks including some of those that Go has complained of (e.g., English 3 textbook of Phoenix). Moreover, the findings of two centers of excellence on several Science and English textbooks (genetically good and unveiling only minor importance) were angrily rejected by Go.

It must be noted that the evaluation team formed by a Center of Excellence must always be composed of three experts in the field. Though still styled as a textbook transfer, Go does not have a monopoly of textbook expertise in several disciplines, and he is being hamstrung by people who dispute his findings.

Aside from evaluations, the NSDB launched last year the Quality Seal Award. The collected nominations from private schools on the best textbooks in Math for elementary and high school. We have evaluated a total of 19 Math textbooks, which have been judged on the basis of content and physical features.

We believe that there must be a mechanism to recognize quality textbooks so that publishers are encouraged to produce superior books. We are pleased to announce that we gave out last June 11 the first Quality Seal Award for the Quality Seal Award was won by Go's textbook. We are also pleased to announce that this year, we are again calling for nominations of textbooks in English and Mathematics used in private schools. We invite the business to help us spread the word on this so that the public will know that such a process exists.

We are also pleased to announce that this year, the NBDB has succeeded in initiating "ecosystem development" of textbooks in the government's Government Printing Office (GPO). This means that the textbooks, like theories this holidays, are available to those publishers who prioritize the improvement of the quality of their subjects and invest in research and development. We hope that the end result of that effort is the production of superior textbooks at affordable prices.

We urge the business to get in touch with the NBDB for future stories on private school textbooks.

—KAREN DAVILA-FLORES,
executive director,
National Book
Development Board

The May 19 directive issued by Education Secretary Jesli A. Lapus says that after a review and evaluation by the International Monetary Fund's Secretary of the term "Simply Interest in the Most Concise" and "Harnessing English as a Skill" of the Phoenix Publishing House Inc., "the same were found to contain major errors [conceptual errors, factual errors, misleading or wrong illustrations, and taught misdirection]."—Inquirer Libran

After the lies, come the bribes

WHEN PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-Arroyo said she did nothing wrong despite having said "I'm sorry" to the victims of the "Hello, Garci" scandal, the people believed her and thought nothing more of it. Her unpronounced no doubt emboldened even her underlings to do through their cronies.

Thus, amid charges that police operatives kidnapped SEN. JUAN Ponce Enrile to keep him from testifying, Palace Director General Avelino Razon would have the temerity to say that the police were merely rebuking him on Chavez's map. And in the thick of the investigations into the illegal concessions under Lozada, now making himself scarce, Deputy Executive Secretary Manuel Gaite would have the gall and a straight face to say that because of duty and not of the positions of his brothers, he gave Lozada P500,000 of his personal funds.

And now billions in taxpayers' money is being squandered by the Arroyo administration is outright bribe—at P500 each. Is the poor just to score political points—some mind that such cockamamie charade would fool them—or are these politicos themselves the only one or two clays. What the administration plans to do for the poor through the rest of the year is as clear as sludge. And the people seem to continue to exist be granted. Is the administration—some mind the result to the intelligence of those who still claim to have any.

I'm not at all surprised the Arroyo administration is flouting the judgement of a Mali de Gusman, Bong Bonifia Gandeza for 2010. Those were three politicians who abysmal desperation, to also thinking of Dap and Jinggoy to run against them? Does one seriously think the people are now dumber than they already are? God help us!

—STEPHEN L. MONSANTO
(monsanto@yahoo.com.ph)

MERALCO technician disconnects an electric meter in Quezon City

Meralco's distribution charge highest in Philippines

WHEN GINA LOPEZ SAID SHE was not involved in the family business, directly or indirectly (Inquirer, 6/28/08), that was similar to saying that she was not involved in the family business, directly or indirectly. That she was not aware of what her brothers Eugenio and Oscar were doing. Neither did she know that Meralco for high power users? Obviously there are things her family never told the Lopezes—and probably never will. So who do we blame—the economy, public?

The fact is Meralco has the highest distribution charge among all power utilities in the country: P2.44/kWh against P1.44/kWh in Cebu, P1.64/kWh in Davao, and 91 centavos/kWh in Iloilo. This is the handiwork of the Lopez-led Meralco, not of the commissioners. Why blame Meralco? Let us count the reasons:

Meralco's customers are inclined to, in our electric bills. "Meter Reader" Meralco, Electric consumption of Meralco, its executives, etc., charged to customers.

When the interests of public utilities clash with the interests of the consuming public, the latter should prevail. Unfortunately with Meralco, the Lopezes' interests come first, over and above all other considerations.

The Lopez-led Meralco even believes it is above the law. Nobody may verify whether or not its proxy votes represent the consumer-majority fund which Meralco charged to consumers with wild abandon.

Meralco's income tax inched its way down to 30%. Meralco's income tax should go down to earth and get real.

—JOSE BERS,
president, National Labor Union,
dino.davis@yahoo.com

Cops in patrol cars preying on law-abiding Filipinos?

I AM A MANILA RESIDENT WHO would like to relate a "kotong" experience with a Manila mobile patrol policemen, if only to warn others to be wary of cops who prey on law-abiding citizens.

Last June 19, around 11 p.m., my wife and I, together with our two kids, were driving along the street in front of San Andres market when a policeman from a relatively new Toyota mobile patrol car signaled me to pull over. I asked why he flagged me down. He said we had entered a one-way street. My wife, who is law professor emeritus of the Philippine Christian University, then showed the policeman her driver's license and

GMA settles for 30-minute phone call with busy Obama

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on Saturday to meet with McCain.

The phone call apparently spared Mr Aquino the inconvenience of shutting back and forth between the two cities.

Mr Aquino received Obama's call in her suite at the Waldorf Astoria, where Obama's wife Michelle was attending an event. The Democratic presidential candidate was reportedly in Pittsburgh, PC when he phoned Mr Aquino.

"The call was made by Senator Obama. There were efforts for them to meet face to face but because the two had to be in two different places at one time, there was no opportunity for a personal visit," Drilon said, adding that the President was not disappointed about not meeting Obama.

PRESIDENT ARROYO arrives at UN headquarters in New York City where she's welcomed by Philippine Permanent Representative to the UN, Hilario Davide Jr. With Ms Arroyo are Foreign Secretary Romulo and Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago

Cut the trip short

In Manila, opposition senators yesterday said Obama was not keen on meeting with Ms Arroyo because "he would lose his votes from the Filipino-Americans [in November] by meeting with President Arroyo," said Sen. Aquilino Pimentel Jr. in a text message to the Inquirer.

Lacson concurred with Pimentel, adding that instead of running after Obama, she should come home immediately to the Philippines with all the problems caused by the storm tragedy and all the problems she has caused."

For his part, Sen. Francis Escudero said, "Our people need the presence of government during these dire times. I hope she doesn't have plans to vacation. Precipitate."

Pleased with Obama's call

Her chore-left-undone list Arroyo should have cut short her US trip after her meeting with Bush last Sunday.

Drilon said the President was not disappointed about not meeting Obama.

"She was pleased with the phone call that came from Senator Obama. And I'm sure she's relieved by the fact that [she wouldn't have] to shuttle back and forth DC on originally planned," he said.

Unfortunately, what we got was that Obama welcomed the visit of the President, recognizing the shared values that we have with the United States. He was also aware that her visit would push forward benefits for our Filipino veterans," he added.

However, Drilon could not say what Mr. Arroyo told Obama. "There was no information relayed to me as to what the President had told Obama. But I'd like to assure you that after the phone calls, she was in very high spirits."

"Of course the actual exchange is something that cannot be disclosed unless by Obama or the President herself, "he said. Here is a text message.

Obama statement

Reporters received a statement from Obama's office dated June 26, the day Ms Arroyo met with Bush at the Oval Office.

In the statement, Obama congratulated administration for the Filipino and his support for the veterans and other concerns.

"I welcome the visit this week of Philippine President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and her delegation to the United States. [this] visit is an opportunity to strengthen our historic alliance and to discuss a host of issues of mutual interest," he said in the statement.

"I wish first to express my sympathies through President Arroyo to the victims and families of Typhoon Pepeng (Parma)," which has just hit the north-ern portion of the Philippines, leaving tremendous devastation in its wake. I urge the US government to provide emergency support to alleviate the suffering caused by this catastrophic natural disaster," the statement said.

"The bond between the United States and the Philippines is strong and enduring. The Philippines has been an important ally of the United States through World War II, the Cold War, and now the fight against terrorism and extremism... After the events of Sept. 11, 2001, the Philippines has worked closely with the United States to root out al-Qaida and its affiliates in the region," he said in the statement.

Filipino veterans

Obama also said he supported the joint RP-US "Balikatan" military exercises which he described as a model of cooperation.

"I support these continuing programs, including upgrading and enhancing the military's equipment and training," he said in the statement.

He also acknowledged how the "Filipinos displayed great courage alongside American soldiers in Bataan and Corregidor, only to be denied their just benefits by our government."

In his statement, Obama urged his colleagues in Congress to honor the historic service of Filipino World War II veterans by finally turning the Veterans' Benefits Enhancement Act of 2007 into law.

"The most important part of our historical relationship is the deep and abiding people-to-people bond that our two nations share... As dedicated citizens, Filipino Americans—4 million strong—embody our nation's highest ideals," the statement said.

Wall Street visit

On Thursday (Friday in Manila), Ms Arroyo paid a visit to the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) on Wall Street to witness the signing of a memorandum of understanding between the NYSE Euronext and the Philippine Stock Exchange (PSE).

NYSE Euronext CEO Duncan L. Niederauer and PSE chair Jose C. Ving signed the MOU paving the way for cooperation between the two securities and technology, market, participant connectivity and market data management.

"We welcome this opportunity to partner with Mr. Ving and his colleagues at the Philippine Stocks Exchange," said Niederauer at the historic signing ceremony. "We are very excited by the success of this alliance, which will benefit and create growth opportunities for both markets and their respective customers."

Mass at St. Patrick's

Ms Arroyo also witnessed the signing of the memorandum of understanding between Bonifacio and Clark Economic Zone for an expansion project and met with Vikas Kapoor, president of Accenture call center company here. She also visited Bellevue Hospital to meet with Philippine healthcare professionals before speaking at a gathering of the Filipino community.

On Sunday (Saturday in Manila) Ms Arroyo and her family will hear Mass at St. Patrick's Cathedral for the 62nd birthday of her husband, Jose Miguel Arroyo. The First Gospler's children, Representatives Juan Miguel and Dakila Arroyo, as well as daughter Lilybeth are here, together with the President's grandchildren in her overnight stay.

Ms Arroyo will fly home via Saturday night after meeting with McCain in Washington DC, and is expected in be back in the Philippines on Monday.

With a report from GDC, Cobarrubias in DC

Survivor returns to Sibuyan for lost love and sad stories

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tell Lipat's father of their plans to get married and wait a baby.

"They had taken the weekend off from their jobs in Manila, where Lipat works as a maid secretary and Bolisdoc, 26, is a baker shop employee. It appeared they had their whole lives ahead of them.

But then the typhoon changed direction changed two lives forever.

Big waves

"At around 9 a.m., the waves were already monstrous and they never stopped ... The ship started to sit until it became too hard to run [for safety]," said Bolisdoc.

Paleontologist, he watched in horror as the ship sank near the center of his unborn child.

"I was thrown overboard and got separated from her. I saw her climb [up the bow] when the ship started to tilt. I told her to jump, but when I glanced back at the ship, she was gone," said Bolisdoc. "The wind that

RAISED in San Fernando, Sibuyan island, Jimmy Bolisdoc talks to reporters of his pain over the Coast Guard's unnecessary order of calling off the search after the discovery of toxic cargo that could threaten reefs in Offshore, the tanker ship now rests on the tomb of his pregnant fiance, Randy Ligas, after

HAPPIER TIMES Alexander de la Cruz holds a picture of his 8-year-old daughter, Angelica (left) and other family members in San Fernando, Sibuyan Island, where not a few readers had come to ask for the final word on their loved ones. >>

MOTHER IN SEARCH OF SON Elizabeth Bacalso of Davao City, Cebu, is still full of hope that her son Jessie James Jr. (in photo) survived the sinking of Princess of the Stars.

>>

times was just too strong."

Lucky few

He said he did not want to abandon his fiancée but realized he had to save himself. He said some people managed to get on board a life raft and they dragged him to get onto it.

But he cried out in fear from over. "There were 50 of us on the raft being tossed about by the sea," he said.

Some of those lucky enough to have made it onto life boats did not make it, succumbing to the massive waves.

But Bolisdoc is one of the lucky ones. Out of the 862 passengers and crew on board the ferry, only 57 survivors have been found six days since it sank. It is believed that most of the dead are trapped inside the sunken ship.

'I love you, Papa'

Nearby, Alexander de la Cruz was holding a picture of his eight-year-old daughter, Angelica. In the picture, she was smiling in the air beside her uncle, sister and baby cousin Joann.

De la Cruz had sent Angelica, the fourth in a brood of six, to live with relatives in the United States so she could have a better life. The family had returned to the Philippines for a vacation and to visit family in the second islands.

"Her last words to me were, 'I love you, Papa,'" he said as he was consoled by relatives gathered around him.

The search for bodies has been temporarily suspended after it was revealed that the ferry was carrying a consignment of a deadly pesticide. Divers were pulled out of operations yesterday and flown back to Manila for medical examination.

Still waiting

Nevertheless, De la Cruz decided to wait. "We can't do anything. We will wait as long as we can. Of course, we are still hoping to find them alive."

He arrived on the island from Oriental Mindoro on Thursday accompanied by another relative, Joseph Flores.

Aside from Angelica, they are also looking for the rest of their family: A. Rona, 40, Rona's wife, Mady, 40, and their son, Alexander, 9, and child Cyrene, who are all henceforth relatives.

According to De La Cruz, Bonani relatives are flying in from the United States to continue the search.

"I want to stay here until [their bodies are] found," he said. With a report from AFP

Sulpicio blames Pagasa for sinking of Princess of the Stars

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Arthur Lim, Sulpicio's legal counsel, said it was Pagasa's supposed inaccuracies in predicting the movement of Frank that caused the ship, the company's "crown jewel," to be in the eye of the storm leading to its sinking off the coast of Sibuyan Island last Tuesday.

"As of 11 p.m. of June 20, three hours after the Princess of the Stars ship left and it was still in Carmelray, Frank had changed course. Pagasa knew this but no one else did. But there [still] was no report [of a] doubling back or the like," Lim said.

Lim said Digos should have immediately alerted the Coast Guard that Frank was moving westward so the Coast Guard could relay the information to all ships at sea.

The decision of the Boac could have shifted its course and taken shelter before tragedy could strike.

"If they [Pagasa] had done this at 4 a.m. when Frank was still calm far from the route of the vessel, nobody was in danger. Even when there is a ferry, very good and sound shipbuilder ones, the ship could have sought shelter and we would not have this case," the lawyer said.

It was Pagasa's negligence that caused the tragedy, Lim reiterated.

Sulpicio's Gobu-paro captain also used this line of argument as the board of Madam Sagsoy's probe into the disaster proceeding.

'It's guessing only'

Capt. Senator Ortanez, who is in charge of Sulpicio's operations in the Cebu port, said information on the typhoon's change of course from a northwesterly to a northerly direction was mentioned for the first time in Pagasa's 4 a.m. bulletin for Boac, Romblon and Caticlan to the Princess of the Stars at around 6:30 a.m.

"Pagasa is using it's guessing only," Ortanez quoted Princess of the Stars' Capt. Florencio Maximo Sr. grumbling at around 7:30 a.m. by then, the ship was already in treacherous waters.

Ortanez said the ship's second mate, his nephew Jay Ferrer Labiaga, was also on watch this several times, telling him how Maximo was having a hard time steering the vessel which, he presumed, must have been caught in the eye of the typhoon.

At around 9 a.m., Ortanez said his nephew texted him again to report that the captain had ordered the passengers to don life jackets and to prepare to abandon ship.

Going under at 12:55 p.m.

Shortly before noon, Labiaga texted that the ship had listed 40 degrees, adding that he thought they were already in the eye of the typhoon and so requested prayers for their safety.

Ortanez said he called up Labiaga's cousin who passed the phone on to Maximo Jr. The ship captain said he had already slowed down the engine to keep the ship from completely keeling over, Ortanez said.

Labiaga also managed to text the last position of the ship before it sank at around 12:55 p.m., telling nearly 900 passengers and crewmembers.

Strangely, however, Ortanez said he had "accidentally erased" all the text messages he received from his nephew who with Maximo is counted among the missing.

The port captain said a chart to show SMI members the ship's planned route, the actual course it took, and the earlier and later projected paths of typhoon Frank.

Like a brother

Ortanez said he was in constant touch with the ship and was continuously monitoring weather reports as the Princess of the Stars and other Sulpicio vessels were plying their routes.

Ortanez, who has been with Sulpicio since 1975, was the captain of the ill-fated Doña Paz, but he was on leave when it sank in 1987, killing about 4,000 passengers.

He said Maximo was like a brother to him.

"He is also from Bohol. He has a pic-ture, it's a village we used to [work] together. He is also here inside [at base]," Ortanez said.

Ortanez said Maximo had exercised his discretion to leave the port of Manila at around 8 p.m. on Friday when Manila was still under typhoon Signal No. 1.

He said that 4 p.m. Digos's bulletin that ship at all indicated that Frank, which had made landfall in Samar, was forecast to be heading northeast toward the Bicol region.

Pagasa report confusing

Because Signal No. 2 was already hoisted over Masbate and Signal No. 2 over Romblon, Ortanez said he communicated with Maximo who told him at around 11 p.m. of Friday that he would try to avoid the typhoon's either by passing west of Romblon or before Masbate.

Ortanez said the Pagasa report that they received around that time showed that the typhoon was already in the vicinity of Masbate but no indication of the disturbance changing course, although Signal No. 3 had already been hoisted over Romblon.

The following day, Ortanez said he learned that the 4 a.m. report from Pagasa stated that the typhoon had changed course over the past six hours, and was now heading southwestward and threatening Mindoro and Batangas.

The report sounded Ortanez of the State at around 7:20 a.m. on Saturday, Ortanez said.

He said Maximo sounded confused by the Digos report and decided to try to head south, probably to seek shelter at Carmen Bay on Romblon Island.

Not warning but news

Pagasa's last weather report before the accident, which came out at around 11 a.m., positively indicated the typhoon passing Romblon, but it did not reach the Sulpicio vessel, Lim said, contradictions with it caused by 9 a.m.

"It's as if we can't rely on Digos. Based on Ortanez' statement, the pieces of information they give are not warnings but news. They already happened before it's disseminated. The typhoon's change of course was not reported so a lesser boat as something that has happened already," Lim later told reporters after the hearing.

Lim said that Sulpicio was not shifting the blame for the tragedy to Pagasa but only exposing the facts of the accident to help the BAI in formulating its recommendations.

Typhoon's character

BAI member Benjamin Mina questioned Ponteres on his familiarity about a typhoon's character and behavior and why a plan of the disturbance which could be as wide as 48 miles. This means a ship could still be caught in bad weather even if it is not in the eye of the storm.

Another board member said that while Pagasa reports were not meant to warn, their projections would indicate other possible courses that the typhoon might take.

The board chair, Ramon Liway, inquired whether Ponteres was aware that the Pagasa report contained a forecast of the track of the typhoon for up to two days.

It was revealed in the hearing that the weather reports from Pagasa were received by the Sulpicio office in Manila and relayed to Cebu via radio.

At press time, radio operators from Sulpicio in Manila and Cebu offices were still testifying before the board on the sending and receipt of messages about the weather, the situation at sea and the condition of the ship.

"PERFECT ECONOMIC STORM" Militant groups rally in front of Quiapo Church to protest the high cost of living as food and oil prices continue to soar.

HITTING THE TARGET Activists throw plastic bags with red paint as they pelt the main office of Petron in Makati City on Friday (See below). The demonstrators are demanding the government to take immediate action in the continued increase of oil prices.

SEEING RED Militants protesting the spiraling prices of oil make their anger felt on a window of Petron's main office.

Oil hikes past $140/bbl …

From page A1

16, London Brent crude settled up $1.50 at $139.82 a barrel.

The fresh record peak for oil on top of a barrage of negative corporate and economic news prompted a further flight to global stock markets.

World stocks fell in a three-month low on Friday after the surge in oil prices and a deteriorating global inflation picture fanned concerns over the outlook for corporate profits. (See story in Business section.)

16th time this year

In the Philippines, the pump prices of gasoline breached the P60-a-liter mark for the first time after Pilipinas Shell Petroleum Corp. and Chevron Philippines last night announced they were jacking up their pump prices by P1.50 per liter.

For Shell, the new price in Metro Manila is now between P60.07 and P60.57 for unleaded gasoline and between P59.98 and P60.21 for premium gasoline.

For Chevron, also in Metro Manila, it is between P60.47 and P60.63 for unleaded gasoline, and between P59.98 and P60.30 for premium.

The other companies were expected to follow suit as had happened in the past.

The latest price adjustments marked the 16th time this year that local pump prices had increased. It was also the sixth time that oil firms had jacked up prices for gasoline and diesel by P1.50 a liter.

Fresh data showed surging energy and other raw material costs are putting upward pressure on prices in countries from Japan to France.

Libya studies cut

Oil has surged 45 percent so far this year, raising fears for businesses, consumers and governments and confounding central banks that are struggling to balance rising global inflation with economic sluggishness.

AT A PUMP A trader stands in front of an electronic stock board showing a downward trend in the graph at the Philippine Stock Exchange Makati City on Friday.

The head of Libya's national oil company said the country may cut crude production because the oil market is well supplied, according to news reports.

Libya also said it was studying possible options to use output in response to potential United States actions against producer countries.

The crude oil market spiked sharply higher in early trading after Libyan National Oil Company chief Shokri Ghanem said that Libya was considering a production cut," said Tim Evans of Citi Futures Perspective.

Ghanem, Libya's most senior oil official, said he was studying the possibility of reducing production in response to a bill before the US Congress that would empower the US justice department to sue members of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (Opec) for limiting oil supplies.

"There are threats from the Congress and they are taking Opec to court, crossing the jurisdiction of the US outside the US," he said.

Libya pumped about 1.71 million barrels per day (bpd) of oil in May, according to a Reuters survey out of total Opec output of 32.12 million bpd.

US President George W. Bush has said he would veto the legislation if it were passed by Congress. The House of Representatives passed the bill in May but the Senate has yet to schedule a vote on the measure.

Oil prices have rallied over the past six years, supported by surging demand from emerging economies like China.

Rising flows of cash into commodities from investors seeking to hedge against inflation and the weak dollar have added to gains this year.

Rising fuel costs have strained economies and spurred protests around the globe, prompting Opec kingpin Saudi Arabia to pledge to hike output during a meeting before producers and consumers meet over the weekend.

Opec president Chakib Khelil said in an interview Thursday that prices could reach $170 a barrel in the coming months, and he reiterated the cartel's position that speculators, not a supply problem, was driving oil to new highs.

"I forecast prices probably between $150 and $170 during this summer. That will perhaps ease toward the end of the year," Khelil told France 24 television, according to a text of the interview released by the cartel.

Negative market factors

The latest round in a global stock markets selloff began earlier this week when Goldman Sachs urged investors to sell bank and some weaker shares.

To make matters worse, oil returned to rally to set a fresh record peak, with a deteriorating inflation picture to developed and emerging markets pressuring major central banks to raise interest rates in the face of slowing global growth.

"Heavy negative market factor post-July thinkable is in the picture, and with the US selloff thrown in on top of that, panic-selling has been triggered," said Ole Hyen-sen, market analyst at Samsung Securities in Seoul.

MSCI's main world equity index fell 0.6 percent to its lowest since March, with the index on track for the worst monthly performance in percentage terms since September 2002, according to Reuters data.

US and European stock markets took a pounding as renewed fears of a credit squeeze roiled the banking sector, further darkening the economic outlook.

On Wall Street, the Dow Jones Industrial Average sank 3.03 percent to 11,453.42, a 21-month low, the lowest close for the Monday index since September 2006.

The technology-heavy Nasdaq composite shedded 3.33 percent or 2,331.37 and the Standard & Poor's 500 broad-market index retreated 2.94 percent to 1,283.15, the weakest for the two indexes since March.

European shares also saw dizzying losses led by the banking sector as troubles for Belgium-Dutch giant Fortis and worries about the prospect of higher interest rates sent investors running for cover.

In London, the FTSE 100 index plunged 2.81 percent to 5,518.20 while in Paris, the CAC 40 shed 2.43 percent to 4,426.19 and in Frankfurt the DAX index lost 2.39 percent to 6,409.68.

The plunge in Wall Street shares ruined Asian investors. Asian stocks dropped and safe-haven government bonds rose on Friday, aggravating investors' fears of high inflation and slowing economic growth. (See related story on B1.)

The selloff accelerated as crude oil futures surged.

New York's main oil futures contract, light sweet crude for August delivery, climbed up a hefty 0.29 dollars at 139.84 dollars a barrel, marking a record finish, after topping 140 dollars for the first time.

Oil futures were also driven up as investors reassessed comments the Federal Reserve made Wednesday when it held a key interest rate unchanged. Many investors who had expected the Fed to raise interest rates in August now think a rate hike is unlikely until after the November election as next year said James Cordier, president of Tampa, Florida-based trading firm Liberty Trading Group and OptionSellers.com.

Investors even affect the dollar; many analysts believe the Fed's rate cutting campaign, which began last September, had resorted to do with weakening the dollar against the euro and sending oil prices skyrocketing.

Investors have recommended assets as oil when the greenback is falling. Also, a weaker dollar makes oil less expensive to investors dealing in other currencies.

The dollar slid against the euro after the Fed's statements Wednesday, and was down again on Thursday.

"Breaking through $140 now … seems hard to resist," Cordier said.

Protest actions

In Metro Manila, consumer and leftist groups are holding metro-wide protest actions for the third straight week against the new pump price increases.

"If the rate they [the oil firms are going], pump prices will have already reached P65 by the time President Macapagal-Arroyo delivers her State of the Nation Address in late July," said Renato M. Reyes, Jr., secretary-general of the Bagong Alyansang Makabayan.

"The onslaught of weekly price hikes has become unbearable. We don't know how the poor can still cope with such high prices," he said.

Reyes said more groups were planning to hold a nine-barrage next week.

"The economic hardships are pushing people to protest," Reyes said as he criticized the call to lift the value-added tax on petroleum products. Reuters, AFP and Bernard M. Domingo

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Across the NATION

Support for war on 'jueteng' grows

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—TWO LOCAL OFFICIals known for their crusade for good governance have thrown their support to a crusade against underworld gambling in Pampanga, which has become known as the "jueteng" capital of the country.

Isabela Gov. Maria Gracia Cielo Padaca and Naga City Mayor Jesse Robredo issued a letter of support for the anti-illegal gambling campaign led by Pampanga Gov. Eddie Panlilio.

Filipinos in the country and abroad also joined online petitions to support the same crusade.

Padaca and Robredo issued the statement of support after Panlilio filed a plunder case against suspected jueteng lord Rodolfo "Boyet" Plaridel on June 23.

Panlilio asked the Ombudsman to turn all the pieces of evidence used in the intelligence he submitted former President Joseph Estrada of plunder as supporting evidence in his complaint against Plaridel. He also asked that a preliminary investigation be conducted on Plaridel.

"We would like to inform you that we are in full support of your crusade against illegal gambling which is now as one of the major reasons for the rampant poverty that is pervasive in our country," Padaca and Robredo said in a letter dated June 26.

Illegal gambling, they said, "does not only destroy the life of the gambler but it also affects every member of his family."

"We believe that this filing of a case against one of the country's alleged illegal gambling lords is a welcome development towards bringing to justice those that have continued to corrupt our society," they said.

They also asked Director General Avelino Razon Jr., Philippine National Police chief, to "act on this growing problem not only in Pampanga but throughout the Philippines."

The two officials also vowed to cooperate with the police in identifying and prosecuting people involved in operating illegal gambling in their areas.

The Filipinos for Pampanga Good Governance launched an online petition, drawing 948 signatures in a month's time.

Written by Fr. Carmelo Diola and created by the Diosdado Movement, the petition said a "good man needs our help."

It said Panlilio, his team and the people of Pampanga "have shown that one can run for public office and win without resorting to dirty money or dirty tricks."

It called for help for the anti-illegal gambling campaign, mainly for the police to give Panlilio an honest and qualified police director.

"Choosing the right person for the job is critical. A governor and a provincial [police] director are receiving illegal money to amount to 50 percent of the solution," the petition said.

The petition on Thursday began making the rounds of the Filipino-American League Congress, one of the biggest Filipino-American groups in the United States. Rosalyn Dreyfus, *Inquirer Central Luzon*

Basilan cops say 1 of 5 seized power linemen freed

ZAMBOANGA CITY—POLICE in Basilan confirmed the release of one of the five linemen of the Basilan Electric Cooperative (Baselco), who were abducted by the Abu Sayyaf in Tuburan town on Thursday.

Bonnie Tumbang was freed Thursday night by the bandit group, led by Furuji Indanan, Radzmanan Ajanul, Hadenin Muhtadil and a certain Matsing.

Alfred Oyao, Baselco manager, said the Abu Sayyaf was demanding ransom for the release of the remaining victims, Engr. Hugo Bicia and Paul Herwig, and Alberto Singson and his brother Emilberto.

"But we are not going to feed the demand," Oyao said, adding that Mindanao officials also told them not to give any money.

He said there was no easy deal for the families of the victims to produce the ransom because they were poor.

Senior Supt. Judih Macapaz-an, Basilan police director, said the members for the kidnappers was convincing.

"Ibinato [Major Dante Balubal] and he received information that the victims had been transferred to Matiqabil village in Akbar town.

In Manuel City, Col. Ray Arola, commander of the Army's 18th Infantry Brigade, said the operations were continuing to rescue and secure kidnapped professor Marivic Nacua.

Nacua was with 20 other teachers who were on their way home to Iligan aboard a public utility jeep when they were taken at gunpoint in Inquisitan, Lanao del Sur, around 4:30 p.m. Thursday.

All the victims, except for Nacua, were released a few hours after the abduction. Julie Alipala, Christine Ortega and Michel Lirio, *Inquirer Mindanao*

LEVELED

Trees have disappeared in a large part of the mountains of Tinoc in Ifugao as these have been subjected to give way to vegetable farms. Farmers from Ifugao province, who bought lands in the mountain, leveled these pieces of property to be planted with salad vegetables for sale in markets in Metro Manila.

6,000 kids in ARMM lose classrooms to typhoon

COTABATO CITY—CLOSE TO 6,000 children in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao would have to hold classes in open fields or barangay halls after their school buildings were damaged by Typhoon "Frank," officials said here.

A report from the ARMM's Regional Disaster Coordinating Council (RDCC) said at least 114 school buildings were damaged or fell into ruins when the storm struck the province last week.

ARMM Education Director Tara Ajdal said classes in areas severely affected by the typhoon were reported to resume next week yet.

Ibn Ajdal said teachers in schools, where the typhoon damaged classrooms, would have to find areas to stretch their classes.

As the developed, ARMM Social Welfare Secretary Ibn Sataida Biraan said relief goods were also being provided to residents who were displaced by the floods.

Among them, she said, were those residing in Maluso, Sumisip, and Tipo-Tipo in Basilan and Sinugaya, Tawi-Tawi.

She said ARMM Gov. Zaldy Ampatuan has ordered them to speed up relief distribution in areas that were struck by Typhoon Frank to help families survive in the wake of damages brought by the typhoon.

Prof. Ulama Akad, ARMM administrative chief of staff, said 500 bags of imported rice were already sent to the affected Maguindanao towns of South Upi, Cotabatobayan, Talitay, Talayan, Shariff Aguak, Ampatuan, Datu Abdullah Sangki, Datu Saudi Ampatuan, Datu Unsay, Datu Piang, General SK Pendatun, Buluan, Mamasapano, Datu Montawal, Pagalungan, Datu Salibo, Mangudadatu, Pandag, Sultan sa Barongis and Shariff Saydona.

He said 200 more bags of rice were given to nine towns in Maguindanao, Shariff S. Mendoza, *Inquirer Mindanao*

7,000 troops to be sent to ARMM for Aug. 11 polls

DARAKU, SHARIFF KABUNSUAN—At least 7,000 policemen and soldiers will be deployed to the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) to ensure that the Aug. 11 regional elections will be peaceful and orderly, the police said yesterday.

Supt. Danilo Bacal, ARMM police spokesperson, said while there were indications that this year's regional elections would be peaceful, they were not taking chances.

Senior Chief Supt. Jose Dalidan, ARMM police director, said strike previous political enemies to the six provinces regions, the August elections could be the most powerful because of the absence of intense political rivalry.

Incumbent ARMM Governor Zaldy Ampatuan, of the ruling Lakas-CMD Kampi alliance, is being challenged by six aspirants, including Mayor Alexander Isaac of Cotabato, Italy, who was arrested and charged with the recent kidnapping of four soldiers and the Dilkon and three others.

"We have to ensure the safety of the voters so we are planning to deploy such a big security force in the region for the regional election," Bacsa said.

The ARMM, which has about 1.1 million registered voters, is composed of the provinces of Maguindanao, Lanao del Sur, Shariff Kabunsuan, Tawi-Tawi, Basilan and Sulu.

It has the reputation of having the highest number of "ruse" elections and is also looked of the Moro rebellion.

Bacsa said the implementation of the election gun ban has so far resulted in the confiscation of 27 firearms and the arrest of several violators. Edwin O. Fernandez, *Inquirer Mindanao*

DOTC to tighten rules on issuing licenses to young drivers

BAGUIO'S new trick come from spanking motorists, who learn down roads with little care for pedestrians crossing the streets. DOTC blames young drivers who get their professional licenses without their skills being tested.

BAGUIO CITY—THE DEPARTment of Transportation and Communication is studying tighter rules for issuing professional driver's licenses to young applicants after officials noted a link between traffic accidents and young public utility drivers.

Federico Mandapat Jr., DOTC Cordillera director, said the proposed policy shift was discussed as early as February by DOTC regional directors.

Ifugao drivers used to be known for their peculiar defensive driving tactics, Mandapat said, because the narrow roads and the steep incline required drivers in the 1970s and 1980s to urban to give way.

The website of the Land Transportation Office defines defensive driving as a "demonstration of an attitude, awareness and driving skills" that prevents "crashes before they occur."

Culture change

But Baguio's driving culture changed recently due in part to a faster work pace in the city as well as growing frustrations over heavy traffic jams, he said.

Law enforcers saw a trend of violations from public utility drivers aged between 18 and the early 20s, Mandapat said.

Perfecto Ishiang Jr., president of the Federation of Jeepney Operators and Drivers Associations of the Philippines in Baguio and Benguet (Fedjodap), said many of these young drivers have no experience to operate public utility vehicles but are already granted professional licenses.

Ishiang said 4,437 public utility jeepneys and 3,500 taxicabs ply the city.

Mandapat said these drivers are "suspected" (during road safety procedure) and many candidates filed before DOTC license these young drivers.

"I am not saying every 18 year old is guilty, but these are generally inexperienced drivers who serve so many passengers. Maybe we can change the rules as a professional driver must first have years of experience on the road first," he said.

No record

DOTC has no record of the number of public utility vehicle drivers who are under 20 years old, "but the incident is substantial," Mandapat said.

Baguio officials are discussing a proposed ordinance to prevent road accidents in the city.

The proposed ordinance fines motorists with as much as P5,000 and the confiscation of their licenses if they do not stop when driving towards a pedestrian's lane.

The measure said "motorists do not anymore give any respect to pedestrians even if they are prepared to stop[] pedestrian lanes."

Councilors Fred Bagbagan and Elaine Jordanesa, who sponsored the measure, said the proposed ordinance obliges motorists to "stop before pedestrian lanes for at least three seconds at all times." Vincent Cabreza, *Inquirer Northern Luzon*

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Ilonggo folk slowly rise from the mud

By Hector P. Bargas Jr.
Iloilo City

THE MURKY FLUSHING WATERS that overturned cars, swept away houses and turned entire villages into watery pools of death and destruction overnight have receded.

But along the streets and in villages, images that offer stark reminders of the tragedy remain.

Knee-deep mud still coats many streets that are littered with trash and debris, fallen trees and electric poles. Several vehicles are still stuck in the middle of rice fields with bridges only half of their structures standing.

In many houses, thick brown lines are etched in walls and fences, a reminder of how high the waters rose and how close the residents live here to the height of the unthought of Typhoon "Frank."

Worst ever

Officials said the flooding is the worst experienced in Western Visayas, which has stunned Ilonggo folk now grappling to rebuild their lives and regain their lost sense of peace and security in this normally laid-back communities.

"This is the first time that I have witnessed anything like this," said 75-year-old Belle Dee Abel Tapas Ile.

Disaster and local officials swamped by frantic calls for help from residents in rooftops and in trees were overwhelmed by the extent and magnitude of the calamity.

"Everyone was asking for help but even rescuers were victims of the flood," said Jerry Bernat, executive officer of the provincial disaster coordinating council.

Bernat's wife and daughter themselves went to the roof of their house as the water rose quickly at dawn.

Thousands of residents fled their homes to escape the rampaging waters.

Reuben Obogid and her husband Rodrigo, both 49, and their 11 children age 9 to 29 years old, fled from their two-story house in Barangay Democracion to Jaro District as soon on June 21 after floodwaters reached chest level. They lost all their belongings.

"The worst was so fast that we only had time to save ourselves," said Reuben.

Lucky

Their family is among the 642 evacuees who have been staying at the Jaro Cathedral compound since last Saturday.

But despite losing almost all their belongings and abandoning their home, they consider themselves lucky.

"We are all still here. None of us got lost in the flood," said Rodrigo.

Iloilo City and neighboring towns have unobtrusively experienced flooding during heavy rains and typhoons. But Ilonggos were caught by surprise by the record of Frank which ravaged residential areas and urban centers.

At least 336,449 families or 1.68 million residents of Western Visayas were affected by the calamity as of June 23, according to reports of the provincial disaster coordinating council and regional disaster coordinating council.

The typhoon left at least 284 dead and 136 injured. But the death toll could still increase as at least 232 remain missing.

The city and province of Iloilo were the hardest hit accounting for 163 dead, 130 missing and 54 injured. At least 145 of Iloilo City's 180 barangays were affected including subdivisions in Jaro District and the neighboring town of Pavia.

Aklan had the second highest death toll with 51, followed by Antique (30), Capiz (12) and Negros Occidental (16).

The flooding spared no one from poor settlers along river banks and creeks to middle and upper middle class families in posh subdivisions.

Inquirer photo correspondent Arnold Almacen said his wife fled from their house in Barangay Camalig in Jaro District around noon last Saturday after water started entering their house.

They were preparing to transfer their belongings to his mother's house a few meters away when the water suddenly reached waist high.

Almacen managed to save their television set and DVD player but all other things were lost including their clothes and CDs of Elvis of photos he took as the water inside their house reached 10 feet high.

During the evacuation, he held his camera wrapped in a plastic bag. "This is my livelihood," he said.

Almacen also managed to save their dog "Bulldog" and cat "Whity Jr." He went out the next day in borrowed clothes to cover the disaster and take pictures.

Even television stations were not spared. GMA 7 had to relocate its studio and technical operation centers to the Iloilo provincial capitol after their station in Jaro District was flooded.

Iloilo City Mayor Jerry Treñas, who was attending a seminar in Morocco at the height of the typhoon came home with most of his belongings, vehicles and appliances damaged or lost due to the flood. His wife and children had evacuated their house in Mandurriao District.

Crops

At least P1.3 billion worth of crops and livestock were lost during the flooding, said Leovy Nacionales, regional director of the Department of Agriculture.

This includes 71,000 hectares of palay plantations or an equivalent 78,000 metric tons of rice; also lost were 15,000 ha of fruit-bearing, especially in Capiz and Aklan, 144,179 heads of poultry; and 209 heads of cattle.

Nacionales said there was still a chance for rice lands in the vegetative state to recover but that the destroyed crops would affect the buffer stocks intended for lean months.

While Iloilo is among the country's leading producers of palay the loss of rice lands could result in further increases in the prices of rice, said Nacionales.

The flooding also destroyed two dozen hospitals and damaged two others in Iloilo alone, according Dr. Patricia Grace Trabado, provincial health officer.

Trabado said the scare of the officials could affect the treatment of patients and victims who are expected to be affected with water borne and respiratory diseases.

The Iloilo provincial engineering office estimated the damage to bridges in Iloilo alone to reach at least P24.1 million.

Help

Amid the calamity, an outpouring of help from Ilonggos here and abroad has sprung.

Cash donations from individuals and businesses sent in the evacuation center at the Jaro Cathedral reached P118,307.20 as of Wednesday.

The donations mostly amount to P500, the lowest at P50. But a company donated P80,000 in check to the victims. Most donors wanted to remain anonymous.

Help in the form of used clothing, noodles, canned goods, rice and bread also came.

Students, seminarians, priests, youth groups and other volunteers have been reading to evacuation centers.

"It's stressful but we are driven by concern for those who need help. I'm happy being here and in my own little way helped even just a few of the victims," said seminarian Bichky Iscinio, 27.

While the efforts of the calamity linger, Ilonggos are starting to get back on their feet again.

Rodrigo Obogid, a market sweeper, said his family wanted to go back to their homes.

"We want to go back soon if we see three straight days here because it's so cramped here. There are too many of us here," he said. He family sleeps on spread out cotton boxes at the evacuation center.

Mayor Treñas has launched the "Ilonggos Unidos"—a movement to spur Ilonggos to rebuild and rebuild their damaged lives.

"I cannot foresee how many years we will recover. But we will overcome," said Treñas.

For Obogid, the first step is going home and cleaning the mud and debris from their house.

RESIDENTS pull out a car carried by floodwaters near the national highway in Iloilo. ALEXANDER MONTEALEGRE

'Everyone was asking for help but even rescuers were victims of the flood'

SOLDIERS at the Air Force base in Mandurriao District in Iloilo ready blankets to be distributed to evacuees yesterday.

Republic of the Philippines
ENERGY REGULATION COMMISSION
San Miguel Avenue, Pasig City

IN THE MATTER OF THE APPLICATION FOR THE APPROVAL OF THE FIFTH ADJUSTMENTS WITH PRAYER FOR PROVISIONAL AUTHORITY

ERC CASE NO. 2009-024 RC

MIRANDEÑO ORIENTAL I RURAL ELECTRIC SERVICE COOPERATIVE, INC. (MORESCO I),
Applicant.

Promulgated:
Date: May 04, 2010

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

TO ALL INTERESTED PARTIES:

Notice is hereby given that on May 07, 2009, Miranda Oriental Rural Electric Service Cooperative, Inc. (MORESCO I) filed an application for the Commission's approval of the rate adjustments, with prayer for provisional authority.

In the said application, MORESCO I sought the approval of the following rate adjustments:

Miranda Oriental I Rural Electric Service Cooperative, Inc.
Comparison of Proposed and Existing Rates

Customer Classes	Proposed	Existing	Difference
Residential			
Distribution (p/kWh)	1.1983	0.8486	0.3497
Supply (p/kWh)	4.7750	4.7750	0.0000
Metering (p/kWh)	0.6813	0.6813	0.0000
Retailing (p/kWh)	0.3000	0.3000	0.0000
Loan Condonation (p/kWh)	0.3000	(0.1387)	0.4387
Small Commercial			
Distribution (p/kWh)	0.7868	0.4869	0.3000
Supply (p/Customer)	166.5452	171.8800	(5.3348)
Metering (p/Customer)	53.7500	53.7500	0.0000
Loan Condonation (p/kWh)	0.0000	(0.1000)	0.1000
Loan Condonation (p/Customer)	0.0000	(8.8100)	8.8100
Medium Commercial			
Distribution (p/kWh)	0.8869	0.5869	0.3000
Distribution (p/kW)	336.0000	336.0000	0.0000
Supply (p/Customer)	1,111.8898	1,111.8898	0.0000
Metering (p/Customer)	537.7500	537.7500	0.0000
Loan Condonation (p/kWh)	0.0000	(0.1000)	0.1000
Loan Condonation (p/Customer)	0.0000	(8.8100)	8.8100
Industrial			
Distribution (p/kWh)	0.7868	0.4869	0.2999
Distribution (p/kW)	336.0000	336.0000	0.0000
Supply (p/Customer)	1,018.58	1,018.58	0.0000
Metering (p/Customer)	537.7500	537.7500	0.0000
Loan Condonation (p/kWh)	0.0000	(0.1000)	0.1000
Loan Condonation (p/Customer)	0.0000	(8.8100)	8.8100
Public Buildings			
Distribution (p/kWh)	0.8868	0.7868	0.1000
Supply (p/Customer)	166.5452	171.8800	(5.3348)
Metering (p/Meter-hr)	53.7500	53.7500	0.0000
Loan Condonation (p/kWh)	0.0000	(0.1000)	0.1000
Loan Condonation (p/Customer)	0.0000	(8.8100)	8.8100
Street Lights			
Distribution (p/kWh)	0.1868	0.1868	0.0000
Supply (p/Customer)	80.0000	84.7750	(4.7750)
Metering (p/Meter-hr)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Loan Condonation (p/kWh)	0.0000	(0.1000)	0.1000
Loan Condonation (p/Customer)	0.0000	(8.8100)	8.8100
Water Systems			
Distribution (p/kWh)	0.8868	0.5868	0.3000
Supply (p/Customer)	166.5452	166.5452	0.0000
Metering (p/Meter-hr)	107.7500	107.7500	0.0000
Loan Condonation (p/kWh)	0.0000	(0.1000)	0.1000
Loan Condonation (p/Customer)	0.0000	(8.8100)	8.8100
Residential Embedding (NONPC) Fee (%)	0.0000		

The Commission may set the application for initial hearing and pre-trial conference on July 6, 2009 (Tuesday) at nine o'clock in the morning (9:00 A.M.), both at the MORESCO I complex, Lagumbingan, Maasim, Occidental Mindoro, Philippines.

All persons who have an interest in the subject matter of the proceeding may become a party by filing, at least five (5) days prior to the initial hearing and subject to the requirements in the ERC's Rules of Practice and Procedure, a verified petition with the Commission giving the docket number and title of the proceeding and stating the petitioner's name and address (if not represented by counsel), the nature of his interest, the relief sought, the facts and reasons for such relief, and whether he desires to participate in the entire proceeding or only in a specified portion thereof. Any such petition shall be served on the counsel and on each person named therein at his address given in the petition. Any person filing a petition may participate in the proceeding as directed by the Commission unless his participation is limited or denied for good cause shown. Any person who fails to appear at the hearing shall be deemed to have waived his right to participate in the proceeding. Persons who have similar interests may be represented by a single spokesman.

All other persons who may wish to have a voice in the proceedings may manifest their interest by writing to the Commission within the period aforesaid. They shall not be entitled to notice of subsequent hearings unless requested in their petitions. They may present their comments at the hearings.

Any interested person may ask for a copy of the application upon payment of reasonable photocopying costs. Likewise, any such person may examine the application and other documents filed with the Commission during the usual office hours.

WITNESS, the Honorable Chairman, RODOLFO B. AGUINALDO, JR., and Honorable Commissioners, ALMA A. YAN, ALEJANDRO D. BARIN, ANNA TERESA A.R. CASTAÑEDA, and LOIE C. REYES, Energy Regulatory Commission, this date duly stated in Pasig City.

(Sgd.) ATTY. FRANCIS SAN AMBROCIO, JUAN
Executive Director III

Clarification on the 'Climate of terror in Biliran'

IN PARENTHESIS (DUE PARTICULAR) for the information and clarification of everyone, let me humbly clarify certain points of the (Inquirer Visayas) story (Page A19 June 14) titled "Climate of terror in Biliran" by Rolando O. Bontuyan.

I refer particularly in the following:

1. That "Congressman Cheng went on air in a special program story Radio Natin and blamed the Espina family, his known partial enemies, for the assault on his father and security escorts."

Let me add that his father, Mr. Charlie Cheng, also blamed as others he was interviewed by Sammy Rocio of Cebu that many right of the members.

2. Mr. Bontuyan also alleged that according to his source, Biliran registered a higher crime rate in 2007 particularly during the fourth quarter of 2007, meaning that prior to the 4th quarter 2007, Biliran was peaceful practically admitting that during my nine years as congressman and three years as mayor of Naval, the capital town and during more than eight years of my son as governor of the province was peaceful. He did not mention that Congressman Glenn Cheng took his seat as congressman in June of 2007, or during the second quarter of that year.

3. That "Crespo would be identified later as the suspect in the assassination of Biliran Gov. Danilo Patil. In Cebu City on Sept. 7, 2007. He was carrying an ID Card as employee of the provincial capitol signed by Gov. Rogelio Espina."

Mr. Bontuyan did not bother to check if Crespo was in fact still an employee of the province when the killing of Danilo happened. If he did, he would have found out that Crespo was no longer an employee of the province as after the Vietnamese incident Crespo was dismissed. It would have been easy for Mr. Bontuyan to check as he is from Naval.

I hope that your good self will give space in this dear newspaper in your Hinaye section in furtherance of fairness.

Very Respectfully,
Gerardo Z. Espina Sr.

Late SPORTS

Editor Tobbyric S. Melendres
Assistant Editor Francis T.J. Ochoa

COCA-COLA'S Dorsett Copeland challenges an Alaska double team.

Aces keep semifinal hopes alive; Giants rip Realtors

By Marc D. Castillo

TERRIBLY UNDERSIZED AND A MOST Valuable Player short, Alaska leaned hard on a tough defense to post a 77-73 victory over Coca-Cola and remain alive in the race for an outright semifinal slot in the Smart PBA Florida Cup at the Araneta Coliseum.

The Aces made up for the absences of reigning MVP Willie Miller and conquered the Tigers' overwhelming edge in size by gang-rebounding all night and making all the stops in the stretch to raise their record to 6-3.

That mark is good for a tie for third place with idle Magnolia as the Aces near for the seventh time in their last eight games while mightily bouncing back from a 16-point blowout loss to foe Coca-Cola last week.

"We really needed to make this a defensive battle and I think we did that. We gave them problems throughout the game," said Alaska coach Tim Cone.

In the second game, Purefoods boosted its own bid for an outright quarterfinal berth with a 104-89 victory over Sta. Lucia.

With Miller out because of a bout with chicken pox, the Aces played as a team of five players scoring the ball-crushing Sandy Holcomb, who came up with 20 points, 12 rebounds and eight assists.

The Aces outrebounded the Tigers, 50-37 and 16-7 on the offensive end even with Coca-Cola having Jason Dixon and Asi Taulava.

"It wasn't a beautiful game, but today's game was very ugly-ugly," Cone added. "Those are so botched up (in the standings) now that everyone has a sense of desperation in them, to say the least.

"It was the biggest game in the conference for us so far."

The Tigers slumped to 5-6 after taking a third straight loss and things certainly don't look good for Bisky Davis and his bear, who opened up the tournament looking like the team to beat.

Coca-Cola's best record, grounding that a wire over Sta. Lucia to the end of its elimination schedule, would be 10-8, and with idle ALA already with 11 wins and a handful of others capable of getting there, it seems that the Tigers would have to settle for a quarterfinal berth at best.

Alaska scorebord despite going scoreless in the final 1:27 after Jeday Evans scored on a follow-up off a Jeffrey Cariaso miss that made it 77-73.

More Sports on A27 to A32

SM appliance CENTER
BPI EXPRESS CREDIT
shop for your desired appliances and gadgets at REAL 0%
Get a chance to win one (1) of the 30 SONY Handycams or one (1) of the 20 SONY Vaio Laptops
and play for a chance to win a brand new NISSAN URVAN ESTATE (EXCLUSIVE FOR BPI CARDHOLDERS)
Universal Motors Corporation
Every P1,000 purchase entitles you to join. Triple your chances of winning with your BPI Express Credit Card. Now thru July 31, 2008!
SIP
0%
For updated rates and terms.
50

Liga: Pampanga, Iloilo triumph

THE PAMPANGA BUKIDNON COMPLETED A three-game sweep of the qualification round with a 91-84 win over the Zamboanga Sea last night in the Batangas leg of the Liga Filipinas Tour at the University of Batangas gym.

Larry Rodriguez and Ronwen Oreta each scored 16 points for the Bukidnon, who broke away from a 21-all standoff in the second period.

In the first game, Iloilo Shing leaned forward Tagaytay Cavite Heroes to an awful shooting day for a 59-67 decision.

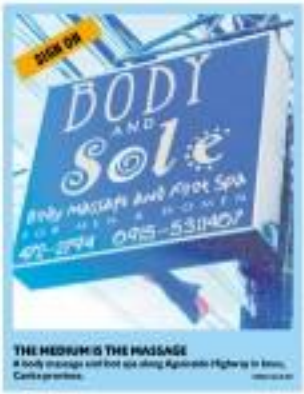
The basket assisted to look scarlet than usual for the Heroes, who made only 33 percent of their 82 shots. They also missed 30 of their 46 three-point attempts.

In contrast, Iloilo virtually had no problems on offense as Chris Jones and Francis Barcelonyo scored 16 points apiece for their second win in three games. The Cebuan E. Barredano and veteran point guard Eugene Tan grabbed 10 rebounds between them.

"We really needed this game for the playoffs," said Iloilo coach Jerry Aranzilla. "I think I reminded the players stepped up in the last quarter."

Aplus METRO
Editor Ever G. Dipasupil
Tell us your feedback: inquirermetro@inquirer.com.ph or 896-3344 loc. 3101 (Metro) E-mail at metro@inquirer.com.ph

Landfill use extended for 15 days



THE MEDIUM IS THE MASSAGE
A body massage sort-lost spa along Aguinaldo Highway in Imus, Cavite province. INQUIRER

Ynares: 6-month extension under study

By Beverly T. Macleod and Ed Yap

THE PROVINCE OF RIZAL WILL ALLOW THE MEDio Manila Development Authority (MMDA) dump trash for another 15 days or its sanitary landfill in the town of Rodriguez.

Rizal governor Casimiro Ynares III said they were giving MMDA a new 15-day extension to ease the garbage problem in Metro Manila.

Ynares said the extension began June 27.

With this new development, Mabati Vice Mayor Renante Mercado directed environmental services chief Danilo Villareal to remove impounded garbage trucks left Monday by the city's waste collectors at the MMDA premises.

Directive

Mercado directed garbage collectors to take the dump trucks immediately to the landfill, said Joey Salgado, city information and community relations department head.

Ynares stressed the temporary permit did not suggest there would be a new six-month contract to use the Rodriguez landfill.

The granting of a new six-month permit was being studied by the Rizal provincial board which would make the decision, Ynares said.

Approval

Approval, the governor added, would depend on MMDA's strict compliance with health and environment-related requirements set for the new 10-hectare Rizal Provincial Sanitary Landfill, and those of municipalities of Rizal.

The Rodriguez landfill, owned by the private company SWIMS International, was originally intended as a dump for the province.

The provincial government made it available to the MMDA for six months, from Nov. 6, 2007 to May 6, 2008, to meet a "looming garbage crisis."

Ynares granted the MMDA's request for a provisional 45-day permit at the end of the six-month period on May 6.

Provisional permit

The provisional permit lapsed June 21, prompting some Metro Manila mayors to appeal for another extension.

Of the total 8,000 metric tons (MT) of trash produced by Metro Manila residents every day, 3,000-4,000 MT are brought to Rodriguez. The rest is brought to landfills in Navotas City, Bulacan, Laguna, and Pier 18 in Manila.

Mercado turned his order for the removal of the trucks followed Rizal's decision to allow the MMDA to use its sanitary landfill for another 15 days, Salgado said.

On Monday, Mabati's waste collectors left some 60 garbage trucks around the MMDA headquarters on orders of Mayor Jejomar Binay after the vehicles were refused entry in the Rodriguez facility.

'Symbolic statement'

Mabati officials said it was a "symbolic statement" to compel the MMDA to find long-term solutions to Metro Manila's garbage problem. The MMDA impounded the vehicles and brought them to a station in Pasig City.

Salgado said the city's garbage contractor requested that photos be taken of all impounded dump trucks to document whatever damage might be caused by the towing.

Embassy can reopen if conditions met

By Julie M. Aurelio

TAGUIG CITY MAYOR SIGFRIDO "Freddie" Tiñga said they might allow the Embassy Super Club and Embassy Ply to reopen only if their agreement adopts stricter security measures to ensure the safety of guests.

"We are not driving away business," said Tiñga. "We are working double hard to live up to our name as the most business-friendly city in the country. We want to make sure patrons to business establishments here are safe."

Business Permits and Licenses Office chief Orlly Mingliana said the city government was drafting a compliance agreement that would, among other things, ask Embassy to install security cameras in and outside the club, and to allow authorities to have access to the footage and the club whenever necessary.

Security

The club, located at The Strip in Bonifacio Global City, would be required to beef up security and have 8-9 enabling dogs to secure the club and its premises.

Embassy was ordered closed the other day following the alleged stabbing of a bellhop-cum-patron, Abram Arrow Vargas, by a business executive, Dindy Mac Obial Montemayor in restroom.

Hours after the Taguig government ordered the closure of the club, a "pot roast party" was held outside. Thursday evening.

Mingliana said the police would await the results of the police investigation on the stabbing incident that prompted the city government to order the club's closure.

Meanwhile, Montemayor, 23, presented himself to police investigators Thursday evening to face the charges filed against him.

Chief of police Supt. Alfred Corpin said they filed a case of serious physical injuries against Montemayor and was unidentified suspects in the City Prosecutor's Office.

Montemayor allegedly mauled Vargas before dawn Thursday inside the club.

In an official statement, the Embassy Club and Cafe Inc. denounced the "alternative" involving the perpetrator Montemayor and Vargas.

In an e-mail to the Inquirer, the Embassy said Montemayor was not their employee but was a "freelance events who performs at numerous clubs and establishments in Metro Manila."

"Embassy regrets the unfortunate incident which occurred last 19 June. Embassy, as an establishment never approved/ condones of any kind," the statement said.

The club's management claimed they acted "promptly and appropriately" after the incident, with the club's security personnel immediately taking steps to protect the victim and other patrons.

"Mr. Vargas was administered first aid by our personnel and we had offered to call him an ambulance to take him to the hospital, although he declined the latter," the statement read.

The Embassy management said they also offered to accompany Vargas to the police community precinct 7, which was in front of the club.

But they said Vargas declined the offer.

"We wish to reiterate that Embassy does not condone incidents of this nature and assures that it will take all

Gov't agent charged with kidnapping for ransom

By Allison W. Lopez

AN OFFICIAL OF THE PHILIPPINE Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) and two other persons were charged yesterday with kidnapping for ransom in the Manila Regional Trial Court. He had was set for the respondents.

Ray Quevedo and his counsel, Florlelita Tiglo and Ban-

yo Lising, allegedly abducted a businessman in 2005 and demanded a ransom of P500,000. Quevedo denied the accusation, but assistant city prosecutor Gene Glenton found probable cause to indict the three for the kidnapping of Jerome Tejadaguit, a landlord investment operator.

Tejadaguit said that on July 16, 2005, Lising, the driver of a friend, set up a meeting in Manila for a possible business deal with a Taiwanese. But before Tejadaguit could enter the Aristocrat Restaurant on Roxas Boulevard, four men pushed him inside a Nissan Patrol car driven by Quevedo, a former high-school classmate.

Quevedo allegedly told the victim he was being abducted for failing to account for the inventories of a Mrs. Mohammad Hassan of Hassan's.

Tejadaguit was brought to the PDEA Detention Center in Quezon City, where he was allegedly mauled and threatened. His personal belongings were also allegedly taken by the suspects.

The next day, Quevedo reportedly met with the victim's sisters and demanded P500,000 for Tejadaguit's release. The demand was turned down.

Tejadaguit was then ordered to issue a P1.1 million postdated check and made to sign a promissory note saying he was indebted to Quevedo. He was reportedly told to issue 21 more checks in the name of Tiglo, supposedly a trusted associate. The victim was released the next day but his vehicle was not returned.

In his sworn affidavit, Quevedo said they merely moved to the seventeenth office to talk about Rustain's investment because it was "noisy" at the restaurant.

Quevedo said Tejadaguit made the promissory note and postdated checks in the presence of his lawyer. "He took it on a voluntary basis," he added.

Tejadaguit's case would still be considered "kidnapping for ransom" even if the object was to compel the victim to pay a debt, the fiscal said.

ATM rob suspect has standing warrant in Parañaque

By Tina G. Santos, Beverly T. Heirloom and Jeannette I. Andrade

A SUSPECT ARRESTED FOR allegedly preying on bank clients while withdrawing cash from an automated teller machine (ATM) in Binondo has a standing warrant of arrest for the same offense in Parañaque City.

Supt. Nelson Yabut, chief of the Manila Police District Station marine, said Bobby Marcoso, 28, was facing attempted robbery charges in the Parañaque City regional trial court of Judge Bonato de Castro.

"His picture was captured by the closed-circuit television (CCTV) camera while he was trying to place adhesive to trap cash in an ATM machine of the International Exchange Bank in Ilaya, Binondo on City last June 2006," Yabut said. "He was arrested but he managed to post bail."

Last Monday Marcoso, who gave his alias as Bobby Tiko, was arrested with Edwin Dela, 30. They yielded tools and gadgets apparently used to trap cash from ATMs.

The suspects tampered with an ATM machine of the Bank of the Philippine Islands on Lavezares Street in Binondo, taking five P500 bills and two P200 bills that got stuck in their cash-trapping device, Yabut said.

Both Marcoso and Dela face robbery and malicious mischief charges in the Manila Prosecutor's Office.

Yabut said the series of ATM tampering incidents prompted bank officials and ATM distributors to consider installing additional security features in the equipment to protect clients.

The police officers said the two ATM distributors, particularly Sycamore Corp. and HCB, the two major providers of the machines.

Fool-proof

"They (ATM distributors) vowed to upgrade their machines to make them fool-proof," Yabut said.

The new security measures taken include the reprogramming of the ATM machine to warn clients to be aware of suspicious devices that could be attached to the machine, and the replacement of the card slots.

Meanwhile, the city government of San Juan wants to round up banks and other business establishments that are known

A reason for everything

PITY NOT THOSE WHO DIED IN the MV Princess of the Stars tragedy, but those they have left behind, the grieving relatives and friends.

The victims of the tragedy are now in the bosom of The Source where they're enjoying peace and tranquility. They are finished with their mundane necessities.

Even the Skeleton among the victims, who we think died too early, are through with their respective missions.

The victims' relatives and friends are going through unspeakable suffering at the moment, but they will soon recover and go on with their lives.

Everything on earth happens for a reason.

* * *

When my friend's son died in my hometown in Davao Oriental a couple of years ago, I was almost to leave for the United States for a vacation that I had been looking forward to.

But when I received the news that my friend's son died in a motorcycle accident, I dropped everything to condole with my friend in his hour of grief.

I could just have sent my friend a big calla-cy (condolence, sorrow) and a letter of condolence, and proceeded with my vacation.

But I didn't do that. I wanted my friend to know how much I sympathize with him in his loss.

When President Ghosts received news about the death and destruction wrought by "Typhoon Frank" in the country, she should have dropped everything and flown home immediately.

The personalities she was scheduled to meet—President Bush, among them—would have understood and even praised her for her concern for her people.

No matter how important she thought her meetings were with these personalities in the US, nothing could match her presence in the country in its tragic hour.

* * *

Embassy can . . .

From page 613

necessary measures to ensure that undesirable persons are not in the area," Mr. Hawkins said, to assure the Taguig City government of our continuing support for its programs to maintain a positive image for the city," the statement said.

The club's vicinity has been the scene of another troubling incident last year involving its patrons, a uniformed

ON TARGET

By Antonio Taduyo

The President has been chasing after Senator Barack Obama, the Democrats' presidential candidate, who is on her US itinerary.

In order to have an audience with Obama, President Gloria might have to shuttle back and forth between Washington, D.C. and New York to do her schedule.

Obama has a full schedule and doesn't have time for a president of a small country he positively considers a banana republic.

Obama probably considers meeting with GMA a waste of time.

Wala ko siyang pakialam, siya ay isang demagogo para kaibot pa ito siya ng kahit ano!"

Whether an deputy left to us that we would doggedly follow someone who's not even US president yet!

* * *

What happened to the equipment that would have guided ships during a storm so the Coast Guard is go to the rescue of ships hounded by pirates or those in distress?

The equipment cost the government P2 billion and is nothing is different: Coast Guard stations in the country.

It's called Global Monitoring Distress Safety System and was bought from a French company.

The government purchased the equipment during the Erap administration upon the insistence of a female government official who had a French boyfriend.

* * *

Who is this government official who is reportedly constructing a villa in Spain? The government official's family speaks Spanish.

How true is the rumor that the family will migrate to Spain soon?

MetroBriefs

7 hijack suspects nabbed

SEVEN suspected members of a notorious hijacking syndicate operating in Cavite, Laguna, Rizal and Quezon province were arrested in Caloocan City before midnight yesterday. The suspects allegedly belong to a Cavite-based group preying on cargo trucks loaded with merchandise that are later sold in the Kamuning (Caloocan), Muñoz, Novaliches and Valenzuela area, Chief Supt. Pedro Chavez, Eastern Police District director, said. Pedro Tango led reporters yesterday when he presented the suspects to the media in a press conference. Named as suspects were Benjamin Serrano, Rosalvel Marcelino, Tony Sayson, Rodel Ribeta, Emilio Marcelino, Tomas Flores and Ferdinand Decierdo. Tango said police received the hijacked truck and its cargo of corrugated sheets estimated to be worth more than P million. Nancy C. Carvajal

Raps junked vs mayor

THE OFFICE of the Ombudsman has dismissed grave misconduct, oppression and illegal detention cases filed against Mandaluyong Mayor Ninfa Sen-Pedro and several others filed by Jaime Ventura, former personnel head of the city government. Apart from Sen-Pedro, those who were also charged were City Administrator Rufino Bunyi and Emilia Lacarte, officer in charge of the administrator's department. The Ombudsman also ordered the referral of Ventura's case to the Civil Service Commission, as the complainant was a permanent government employee. Ventura filed the complaint after Lacarte was appointed personnel department chief when Sen-Pedro won in the May 2004 elections. Julie M. Aurelio

Wanted QC cop falls

THE NATIONAL bureau of investigation has arrested a Quezon City police man long wanted for murder and attempted murder cases. PO3 Joel Tolentino, assigned at the Criminal Investigation and Detection Unit of the Quezon City Police District, was arrested in Barangay Holy Spirit, Quezon City by virtue of warrants of arrest for murder and attempted murder issued by at least three judges. Nancy C. Carvajal

Star City rocks

TIME to rock 'n' roll as Star City launches its third weekend gimmick today with a rock concert featuring Eraserheads, Zeke, Twisters, Parokya ni Edgar and Pinoy Bukas beginning at 6 p.m. today. Patrons may ride the many rides and present at the free gate in front of a special Ride-All-You-Can entrance ticket also located in the concert for only P 650.

The WORLD

Editor Lorraine B. Gueco

US eases sanctions on North Korea

WASHINGTON—NORTH KOREA HANDED OVER a long-delayed account of its nuclear activities on Thursday, prompting a still-wary US President George W. Bush to ease some sanctions on a country he once branded part of an "axis of evil."

Bush cautiously welcomed the action but warned North Korea, which tested a nuclear device two years ago, that it faced "consequences" if it did not fully disclose its operations and continue to dismantle its nuclear programs.

Bush confirmed the action was ordered by the secretive communist state, Bush took a step toward removing North Korea from a US list of state sponsors of terrorism and issued a proclamation lifting some sanctions under the Trading with the Enemy Act.

Seeking to deflect criticism from hardline critics who accuse him of going soft on North Korea, Bush made clear he would use the ones in Pyongyang to keep its promises.

With the unpredictable Iraq war and Iranian nuclear standoff unresolved in the twilight of Bush's presidency, his administration is hoping progress on North Korea can help salvage his foreign policy legacy.

But US officials acknowledged that the North Korean declaration, which came six months after a December deadline, fell short of answering all concerns about Pyongyang's atomic ambitions, especially on past nuclear proliferation activities.

Stephen Hadley, Bush's national security adviser, said the statement covers the amount of plutonium North Korea has produced but does not detail its nuclear arsenal.

But he said US experts could "do the math" and that issue would be discussed in a further phase of the six-party talks involving Pyongyang's neighbors that yielded this deal.

Bush also welcomed an announcement by South Korea that it would blow up the cooling tower at Yongbyon, its main nuclear complex. In an unprecedented move, North Korea has invited Western media to record the event.

North Korea had already begun dismantling its nuclear facilities after talks among China, Japan, Russia, North and South Korea and the United States.

"This isn't the end of the process, this is the beginning of the process," Bush said, insisting that Pyongyang's latest moves would not let themselves end in international isolation. Reuters

Martian soil appears able to support life

LOS ANGELES—"FLABBERGASTED" Nasa scientists said on Thursday that Martian soil appeared to contain the requirements to support life, although more work would be needed to prove it.

Scientists working on the Phoenix Mars Lander mission, which has already found ice on the planet, said preliminary analysis by the lander's instruments on a sample of soil scooped up by the spacecraft's robotic arm had shown it to be more alkaline than expected.

"We basically have found what appears to be the requirements, more ingredients, to support life-whether past, present or future," Sam Kounaves, the lead investigator for the wet chemistry laboratory on Phoenix, told journalists.

"It is the type of soil you would probably have in your back yard, you know, alkaline. You might be able to grow asparagus in it really well."

The rare cubic centimeter of soil was taken from about 2.5 cm below the surface of Mars and had a pH, or alkaline, level of eight or nine.

Pressed on whether there was still any doubt that life existed on Mars in some form, Kounaves said the results were "very preliminary" and more analysis was needed.

But he added: "There is nothing about the soil that would preclude life. In fact, it seems very friendly ... there is nothing about it that is toxic."

The 3928 million Phoenix lander touched down in the north polar region of Mars on May 25 after a 10-month journey from Earth. It is the latest Nasa bid to determine whether water—a crucial ingredient for life—ever flowed on the planet and whether life, even in the form of microbes, exists or ever existed there.

Results in the past 24 hours of soil gleaned on the spacecraft's wet chemistry laboratory showed it to be less acidic than many scientists expected. It also contained traces of magnesium, sodium, potassium and other elements, they said.

When told the pH levels, one colleague "bumped up and down as if he had the winning lottery ticket," mission soil analysis specialist Michael Hecht told a telephone news conference.

"It is a huge step forward," Hecht said, adding the "wet chemistry" technique, which involves mixing Martian soil with water brought from Earth, was aimed at discovering what native Martian microbes might be able to live, survive and grow in the soil. Reuters

ARTISTIC representation, created from simulations, of the impact that gouged out a hole 8,380 kilometers and 15,600 km long in Mars. The giant crater made by an asteroid or comet explains why Mars is so lopsided, with a basin on one hemisphere and high terrain on the other. (Screengrab from Nasa video)

New flavors of Web addresses on the way

PARIS—MOVE OVER .COM AND .ORG. Get ready for a nearly infinite variety of new Web addresses ending in words like .perfume, .sports and .party.

On Thursday the Internet's main oversight agency approved the most sweeping changes to the network's address system since its creation.

According to new rules unanimously passed by the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers, or Icann, at its meeting here, any company, organization or country will soon be able to apply for a new Web address extension, called a top-level domain.

That could smooth the way for Web addresses that end in toy names, brands and generic words. It could also slow confusion in the minds of Web users, create a host of new ways to exploit the Web addressing system and trigger a wave of legal skirmishes over applications to register trademarks—.coke, for example.

Icann's board also passed another less controversial proposal that would allow three domains to be registered in scripts other than Roman characters, like Chinese, Arabic and Cyrillic. Specific countries could receive the equivalent of their two-letter country code, like .jp (Japan) or .ng, in their native alphabet.

"We're expecting a broad range of applicants. Indigenous communities might come forward to protect aspects of their language and culture," said Dr. Dengate Thrush, Icann's chair. "We may see a dot-words in that all the Scrabble in the world will have spaces."

"It's very exciting to see what people will do with these names," he said.

Icann officials said any applications for the new domains would have to go through an independent review process. Third parties will be able to challenge applications on the grounds that a particular suffix could threaten "broader public order." And companies will have the first priority when it comes to claiming their brand names.

Although multiple parties want a name—as is already the case with .sports—conflicts will be settled through auctions.

Currently, the domain name system consists of more than 20 suffixes, which follow the last dot in a Web address.

Tim Ruiz, a senior vice of domain counsel on industry consultancy and he thought the new addresses would subdue and elude average Internet users. AFP

Bomb attacks kill 40 in Iraq including 3 US Marines

BAGHDAD—BOMBS KILLED 97 least 40 people in Iraq on Thursday, including 20 on a tribal scene. Of meeting in Anbar province just days before the US military handed control of security for the vast western region to Iraqi forces.

The US military said three Marines and two interpreters were among the dead in Anbar. That took to 11 the number of US soldiers killed in Iraq this week.

In the northern city of Mosul, a car bomb on a crowded street killed 18 people and wounded 80 near the offices of the governor of surrounding Nineveh province, US forces said.

Nineveh governor Duraid Kashmola had just left his office to investigate damage caused by two rocket-propelled grenades when the car bomb went off. The governor was unhurt. Officials said the bomb may have been an assassination attempt.

Dramatic television pictures showed the bomb exploding near an old woman on the side of a street. A hail of gunfire burst out as security guards opened fire.

Violence in Iraq fell to a four-year low last month, but there has been a spate of attacks in the past week, especially in and around Mosul, which the US military has called Sunni Islamist al-Qaida's last major urban stronghold in Iraq.

The attacks suggest al-Qaida, significantly weakened after a series of US offensives in the past year, is not a spent force.

A US military spokesperson said the Mosul attack fitted a pattern of al-Qaida attacking Iraqis and Iraqi security forces.

The American military said al-Qaida was likely behind the suicide bombing against US-backed Sunni Arab tribal leaders in the Anbar town of Garma, 30 km northwest of Baghdad.

A police spokesperson in the nearby city of Fallujah said 20 people had been killed and 12 wounded.

A tribal leader, Mullah Shihab Ali, said the head of the district council, Ramad Abdul-Salam, seven missing clans killed, he said, as well as three policemen. Reuters

US Supreme Court rules Americans have a constitutional right to keep guns in their homes, a

Americans have right to guns under landmark ruling

WASHINGTON—REPUBLICAN Americans have a right to own guns, the Supreme Court ruled on Thursday for the first time in the country's history striking down a strict gun control law in the US capital.

The landmark 5-4 ruling marked the first time in nearly 70 years the high court has addressed the Second Amendment of the US Constitution. It rejected the argument the right to keep and bear arms was tied to service in a state militia.

Justice Antonin Scalia said for the majority the Second Amendment protects an individual right to possess a firearm unconnected with military service and to use it for traditional lawful purposes, such as self-defense in the home.

The court struck down two parts of the country's strictest gun control laws adopted in Washington DC, 32 years ago—the ban on private handgun possession and the requirement that firearms kept in home be unloaded and disassembled or bound by a trigger lock.

The ruling marked the first time the court has struck down a gun control law for violating the Second Amendment.

The ruling was praise from President George W. Bush, Republican presidential candidate John McCain and Wayne LaPierre of the politically powerful National Rifle Association.

It drew fire from gun control groups, which warned of new legal attacks on existing gun laws, and some Democrats in Congress like Sen. Dianne Feinstein, who said the decision "opens the door to a thousand lawsuits."

The four liberal dissenting justices warned of the ruling's consequences. "The decision threatens to throw into doubt the constitutionality of gun laws throughout the United States," Justice Stephen Breyer said.

Although no individual now has a constitutional right to own guns, that now right is not unlimited, some Scalia, a hunter.

He said the ruling should not be taken to cast doubt on long-standing prohibitions on the possession of firearms by felons and the mentally ill or on laws forbidding the carrying of firearms in places like schools and government buildings or laws imposing conditions on gun sales. Reuters

Romania dilemma: Panel says 11-year-old rape victim can get abortion

BUCHAREST, ROMANIA—A government recommendation drew the opposition of 20 church groups and ruled on Thursday that an 11-year-old rape victim would be allowed to have an abortion in Romania.

Ten-like Christian Orthodox groups had threatened to press charges if the girl was allowed to have a termination in Romania on exceptional grounds since it would be beyond the 14 week legal limit for abortions.

The parents of the girl wanted to travel to Britain where it would be legal for the girl, who is 22 weeks pregnant, to have an abortion.

The stance of the church groups was in contrast to the Romanian Orthodox Church's official view which was the decision should be left to the girl's family.

A committee of government officials and experts met up this week to rule on the controversy and late Thursday that the girl could have an abortion in Romania.

"We are talking about ... the rights of this child who was subjected to rape and incest," said Theodora Stoica, a Labor Ministry official and who was sitting on the committee. The committee will give its full ruling on Friday.

The girl's pregnancy only became known earlier this month when her parents took her to a doctor because she appeared unwell. The told doctors she had been raped by her 19-year-old uncle, who has since disappeared.

Abortions can be carried out later than 14 weeks in Romania but only to save the life of the mother.

Lawmakers are planning to legalize up to 20 weeks if two doctors decide that the risk to a woman's physical or mental health will be greater if she continues with the pregnancy than if she ends it.

The case has bitterly split the medical community. children's rights groups and the public.

In a statement, the church groups offered "material, spiritual and psychological help" to the child's impoverished family asking they would also raise the child in a church institution if the family was unable to care for it.

But rights were apparent even within the church.

Constantin Stoica, spokesperson for the Romanian Orthodox Church, to which more than 80 percent of Romanians belong, said on Wednesday it was "an exceptional situation which could be treated in an exceptional manner and the family is the only one to take this decision."

He said the church considers abortion a crime, but this belief applies to normal circumstances and not to victims of rape.

The National Child Protection Authority has said the girl should be allowed to have an abortion because she is already traumatized by the experience of rape and pregnancy.

The National Bioethic Council, however, said that the rights of the fetus should be considered and the pregnancy should go ahead. They argued that abortion laws should not be liberalized further. AP

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Australia	100	13	₱8	IDD AUST to 8910
United Kingdom	100	13	₱8	IDD UK to 8910
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SPORTS
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40 days to the 29th Summer Olympics

PACQUIAO'S VOW

'Weight won't be a problem'

MANNY Pacquiao before up before working out in Las Vegas. AFP

Filipino icon says he's at 135 already

By Roy Luarca

LAS VEGAS—I'LL MAKE THE weight.

Manny Pacquiao made this promise on Thursday night hours before the official weigh-in for his historic battle with World Boxing Council lightweight champion David Diaz at the Mandalay Bay Events Center here.

The Filipino champion said he has actually reached the weight limit (135 pounds) after a strength-sapping final day workout at the ISM Gym.

He donned a smile not merely because he wanted to prepare better and more properly, thus giving him the liberty to have dinner.

"Para makakain pa ako (So that I can still eat)," said Pacquiao, who'll skip breakfast and lunch prior to Friday's weigh-in.

In his rematch against Juan Manuel Marquez for the WBC super featherweight title on March 15, Pacquiao virtually starved himself in the last week to make the 130-lb limit.

Now, he feels more comfortable in the lightweight division.

"Mahalaga bago ako ang five pounds (Five pounds is a big deal)," said Pacquiao, "Subukin nyan sa talagang oke nyan (I was really having a hard time then)."

"Now I can eat what I want and still make the weight," said Pacquiao, whose climb is beginning to become premature.

Trainer Eric Brown said Pacquiao won't have a problem fighting in the 135-pound division.

"Extra-weight, extra-strength," said Brown, who's been assisting Freddie Roach at the Wild Card Gym since last year.

Brown also sees Pacquiao wresting the lightweight plum.

"Sir (Pacquiao) had a lot of hard work," said Brown. "He's ready to go."

According to Brown, who took over Sean Fontine For now last year, Pacquiao will simply overwhelm Diaz with his speed and power.

"Knockout power, it can't be trained. It's like you have it or you don't," said Brown. "And Pacquiao certainly has it."

Having worked with Pacquiao in his preparations for Pacquiao-Marquez II, Brown said he's in awe of the Filipino senator's work ethic in the gym, refining refinements and going beyond what the training staff called their scope.

"You can teach techniques, strategy, whatever, but never pounding power," said Brown. "It's a gift."

Pacquiao, of course, intends to use that gift and make Diaz his 38th knockout victim on Saturday.

Earlier, Pacquiao apologized for his inconsistent during training, saying the heat got to him after his one-hour final workout.

"Wala akong sinasing. Siguro init, mainit sa loob (It was me but, my skin heat)," said Pacquiao, who spent the afternoon shadow boxing, doing the mitts, hitting the speedball, skipping rope at the overlike ISM Gym.

"Ngayon lang ako nakaranas nito (I've never experienced this before)," said Pacquiao, noting that the temperature reached as high as 42 degrees Celsius in this mountainous city carved out of the Mojave Desert.

It was as hot that conditioning trainer Alex Ariza and friend Edward Lara alternately swiped him with cold towels to lessen the effect of the searing heat on Pacquiao, who still donned a sweat suit.

Without chief trainer Freddie Roach, who was in the corner of another Filipino boxer in a bout held in The Orleans, it was Buboy Fernandez who again supervised the

NCAA Season 84 opens today

By Cedrick Tupas and Jasmine W. Payo

SBC Red Lions look like a done deal

Powerhouse Bombers want consistency

Third seed ranking for Knights

'Cohesive' Cards seek varsity glory

Final Four stint target of Stags

Comebacking Dolphins playing all out

Quick, tough Altas aim high

Blazers try to end skid

I want a war, says Diaz

Champion promises one of decade's greatest fights

LAS VEGAS—HOLDER DAVID DIAZ WANTS SATURDAY'S WORLD BOXING Council lightweight title fight against super featherweight champion Manny Pacquiao to be a "war."

"I want it to be a great fight," Diaz said reporters at the Mandalay Bay Resort venue. "I want it to be a war.

"I want it to go down as one of the great fights of the year, if not the decade," added the Stockton, who spent time the boot in the undertow.

Pacquiao, who has won 46 of his 53 fights and recorded 34 knockout victories, is looking to add the lightweight crown to the flyweight, super bantamweight and super featherweight titles he has already claimed in his career.

The Filipino, however, is not taking Diaz for granted.

"He can punch, he's not careless. He has a chance to win," said Pacquiao. "He likes to come forward and I like to fight a guy like that, I can't take him lightly."

Diaz, who has won 34 of his 36 fights and gained 17 knockout victories, agreed with his opponent.

"If I was Manny I'd be worried about my self, that I'm not going to go away easily," he said.

"He's going to have to deserve brandon and do what he has to do but I will still be there. It's my nature."

The fight in Pacquiao's first as a lightweight, which is six weight divisions higher than when he made his professional debut in January 1995 at the age of 16.

But he is confident he will not be at a strength disadvantage against Diaz, who is a more natural lightweight.

"I'm not worried about my punching power," said Pacquiao.

Much of the pre-fight focus has been on Pacquiao's quest for a fourth title and his climb through the weight divisions.

Diaz, who won his title with a 10th-round stoppage of Jose Armando Santa Cruz in August 2006 and defended it against Nate Moreno a year later, said he was unconcerned about the spotlight being on the challenger.

"That's not a problem," said the champion. "He's done a lot for boxing.

"But I've got to give it to the guy. The guy's a draw. Hopefully after this fight I'll be the draw."

Reuters

Manny needs to be careful—Donaire

By Roy Luarca

LAS VEGAS—MEMBER OF THE SACRIFICIAL lamb.

Nonito Donaire Jr., the Filipino International Boxing Federation flyweight champion, gave this unsolicited advice as he was interviewed about the Manny Pacquiao-David Diaz bustle for the World Boxing Council lightweight crown in here.

"Pacquiao is the greatest fighter in the world right now," said Donaire, after the press conference announcing his entry into the Top Rank stable. "But he still needs to be careful."

Donaire doesn't need to look far for an example.

Back in Bohol but raised in the United States, Donaire was a huge underdog when he fought that then welterweight Vic Darchinyan for the IBF title last July.

Donaire threw a single punch to the face that knocked Darchinyan out. That fight later won King Magazine's "2010 Knockout of the Year" and "2010 Upset of the Year."

"Nobody gave me a chance then, but I did it," said the 25-year-old Donaire, who proved that the feat was no fluke when he stopped Luis Maldonado in the eighth round to keep his title last December.

"Diaz is just like me then. A unrefined tactic," said Donaire. "He's hungry and anybody with the will and heart to win is dangerous."

Donaire's trainer-manager-girlfriend Rachel Marcial is now noted that Pacquiao's edge in speed and power over Diaz will really be difficult to overcome.

The 25-year-old Donaire said the contract signed by his manager, Cameroon Dunkin, with Top Rank president Bob Arum stipulates these fights for him in the next two years.

"I'm very happy. This contract I got me back on track again," said Donaire. "I'm acting as team and fight again."

HANDY Pacquiao steps rope during training. AP

SPORTSWATCH

Lethal combination at Inquirer.net

ALREADY FEEDING THE PUBLIC'S CRAVING for Manny Pacquiao through its Pacquiao Files, Inquirer.net takes its coverage of the Filipino ring icon a notch higher when it posts a running account of the world-bantamweight.

The site will give round-by-round updates on Pacquiao's bid to wrest David Diaz's WBC lightweight crown in this Latter Connection card.

The Pacquiao site also aims to shake hell use of micro-blogging applications by non-only posting photos and video clips but likewise posting micro-entries using Twitter.

Inquirer.net has also provided real-time running accounts and video of previous Pacquiao fights, including the last one against Mexican nemesis Juan Manuel Marquez.

Rush to Infinity tomorrow

SIXTY 2,000 RUNNING ENTHUSIASTS are competing in the Route to Infinity Run 2000 co-presented by Milo and Rush tomorrow at the Fort Bonifacio Global City in Taguig.

Premium footwear and apparel will be awarded to the top three finishers of will be awarded over three distances: 10K, 10K and 5K as well as five different age groups for both men and women.

Winners in the 10K will each receive a Mizuno Wave Inspire and wine bag, the second-placers Mizuno Wave Elixir and third placers a Wave Promise.

Rush model shoes of Mizuno will also be awarded to the top three in the 10K and 5K runs of the event supported by McMillan, McDonald's, Mobility Wellness and Hidden Peak.

Runners can register at Mizuno Bonifacio High Street until today or ride tomorrow from 4 to 6 a.m.

SJC derby today

SEE TV ON MONS FOR IT'S WELL BE RAINING today in Rizal Jose Collesano's "SM the SJC 3-rock derby" set to start at 6 p.m.

A guaranteed prize of P250,000 will be given to the winners, each of managers Rosario Silva and Rachel Chiaro. Entry fee is P5,500.

Other SJC accolades lined up include those Gathers 3-rock derby (July 5), SJC 10-d rock derby (July 7), Rizal Provincial Runner (July 3-rock derby (July 8), Rizalians 5-rock derby (July 12) and Rizal and Run 3-rock derby (July 19).

Likewise, the "Mini-Rambulan Part II 5-rock derby" will kick on July 21, 23, 28, 30 and Aug. 2 with P1.2-million at stake.

Phone call 7250803 and 7250803 for details.

Pacman says latest bout is for RP storm victims, not 'pound title'

LAS VEGAS—WHEN FLOYD MAYweather Jr. abruptly retired three weeks ago, he left a vacancy atop an imaginary list.

Week sports fans around the globe to the Internet's innumerable boxing servitors, fight fans have engaged their hypothetical matchups of the world's best boxers. With Mayweather out of the picture, many believe Manny Pacquiao is the best to assume the top spot.

After all, the Philippines' national icon has the title belts and the recent longevity to deserve that sizeable crown, and the accolades merit serious boxer-centers are underscore that can't be matched with his frenetic, resilient game.

Pacquiao will go after David Diaz's WBC lightweight title at the Mandalay Bay casino on Saturday night, hoping to set an impressive sweet milestone with a major championship in his fourth weight class. Five fighters have ever succeeded in such physical growth, and Pacquiao is all the more remarkable after starting out at light flyweight.

We salute everything he has accomplished in a career that's close, faster and higher than anyone expected. Pacquiao won't promote himself for that best title-for-life crown.

"I would just say thank you to people for believing in me," Pacquiao said. "All I'm trying to do is make people satisfied with my performance, not only in the ring, but as a champion outside the ring."

Most indulgent in these hypothetical ramblings suggest the lightest overall record, title belts, entertainment value and general superiority, as criteria. Promoter Bob Arum believes such a formula is far too complicated to come up with a concrete answer.

Still, Pacquiao's next fight could provide another remarkable line on his loaded list of credentials. Diaz is a former US Olympian and a well-liked champion.

If Pacquiao wins, he'll be a world champion as his fourth weight class. He took Juan Manuel Marquez's super featherweight belt last March.

If Pacquiao loses to Diaz, or if he ever struggles against the lightweight champion, the Filipino star will slip down those mythical rankings. Pacquiao simply doesn't care—and he's thinking much more about the victims of the typhoon that ravished a large swath of his native land and killed hundreds last September.

"I'm dedicating the fight to them," Pacquiao said. "I feel sad because of what happened, but I have to focus on training. If I have a distress, I'm going to help when I get back."

AP

DAVID Diaz (right) wants to Manny Pacquiao's way of a fourth division title. AFP

Weight . . .

From page A27

workout with the assistance of Brown.

At first, Pacquiao, with around 60 assistants and the media, gamely did his exercise, but was clearly impatient near the end. He was pacing the floor back and forth before eventually deciding to climb on the air-conditioned trailer bus, where he obliged interview requests.

Then Pacquiao then sped off back to Mandalay Bay's The Hotel, where he and Diaz are staying for their 1800 pay-per-view bout.

Normally very accommodating to well-wishers, Pacquiao headed directly to his room.

Pacquiao also ordered his chief security Bob Ramos to block off visitors.

Among those who have visited Pacquiao were longtime friends Energy Sec. Lito Atienza and former Gov. Luis "Chavit" Singson.

Torre-Antonio rematch slated

THE REDDICH BETWEEN GRANDMASters Eugene Torre and Rogelio "Joey" Antonio Jr. will take place in Quezon City starting next month.

The highly anticipated duel between the country's chess legends kicks off on July 21 at the Quezon City hall then proceed to Tomas Morato (July 22), La Loma district (July 23), Tandang Sora shrine (July 26), Pugad Lawin shrine (Aug. 1) and Gateway Antonio Union (Aug. 4).

"We take pride that both Eugene and Joey are longtime residents of Quezon City," said Belmonte.

Now that Jose Builders, Inc. president Jerry Acuzar, the sponsor of the first Torre-Antonio match 10 years ago, also vowed to support the rematch.

Torre and Antonio have been the longtime speedsheads of Philippine chess.

3-way baseball race for semis berth heats up

CEBU, BATANGAS AND DAGUPAN TRY to boost their respective bids for the second and last semifinal berth as action in Baseball Philippines' Series 3 resumes today after last week's postponement at the Rizal Baseball Stadium.

The Dolphins, in second place with a 6-3 win-loss slate, hosts the Steelers, joint third with the Bulls with 5-4 marks, in the main game at 2 p.m. with the winner staying in the hunt for the No. 2 spot.

The Bulls, on the other hand, are slightly favored in their 2 p.m. encounter with the lowly Makati Mariners, the pilot series champions who are now languishing in the cellar with a 1-9 record heading into the homestretch of the eliminations.

The Manila Hawks clinched the first semis berth last week with a 9-1 card.

Batangas remains the league's lowest team, piling up a total of 35 runs in their last 11 outings, including a 19-8 rout of Antipolo last week to boost its semifinal bid in the tournament organized by Community Sports Inc. and backed by Milo, Gatorade, Powerade, Indomed Injunctions, Philippine Transmarine Carriers, Harbour Centre, The Heritage Park and Wellcat Shirts with the PSC, POC, Pnba, Philippine Umpires Association and GOOD Sports Radio/91.9 as partners.

The Bulls, however, are expected to encounter tough challenge from the Mariners, who finally stopped their skid with a 9-7 victory over the Dumaguete Outfitters, 8-7, two weeks ago.

Antipolo, however, could end Makati's playoff hopes with a victory over fourth Manila in their 10:00 a.m. clash. The Hawks are expected to run their big guns for the tougher grind ahead.

Piccio cruises to 2-shot triumph in Georgia tourney

PICCIO

MIA PICCIO PICKED UP HER 10TH win in three weeks in the American Junior Golf Association (AJGA) circuit, riding the Sharpest H. Mooney Jr. Bonne Classic with a closing two-under par 69 for a two-shot win over Aurelie Irene of South Carolina Thursday.

Piccio, who posted a record 18-shot win in the AJGA's Medlinn Preseason Junior, also in Georgia, tucked a two-hour weather delay and loosed on a sneaky game and superb putting to hold off Irene, who tied the tournament's best score of 66 with eight birdies at the Goose Country Club course.

"I wasn't hitting it well before the (rain) session, but I guess I just needed some adrenaline," said Piccio, who had earlier rounds of 68 and 72 and finished with a six-under 207 total. "It feels really good to win."

Staying focused was the key to the UCLA-bound shotmaker's success.

"Overall, I shot well. I hit three fairways and 13 greens and made 27 putts," said Piccio, who birdied Nos. 2, 7, 13 and 16 on regulation to pounce on Nos. 4 and 18. "My pacing was really working for me this week. I had 25 on the first day and 27 the next two days."

Irene, five shots behind Piccio at the start of the round, wound up with a four-under par 209 for second while Anna Keith carded a 70 for 210 and a share of third with Kyung Kim, who matched par 71.

"I had eight birdies and I thought my pacing worked well," said Irene.

As to the first two rounds, Piccio struggled with her driver but the 16-year-old Filipina, who also won one event, placed twice and had two third-place finishes in the PCNT (Future Collegiates Model Tour) Green Dino junior girls circuit, kept her poise and used a respectable short game to keep the lead and thwart the charging Irene.

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ASEAN BADMINTON

Paz-Ramos claims bronze

By Marc Anthony Reyes

THE COUNTRY'S MIXED DOUBLES pair of Greg Paz and Gelli Ramos battled one the best contingents by salvaging a bronze medal after toppling Australia's Second National yesterday in the 34th Asian Schools badminton championships at the Hisap Apatan Stadium.

The RP tandem, who started playing as a team only last week, bested Thosi Siripong Keowo and Thitaphidakarn Amyeonsuwan, 21-16, 21-18, in their quarterfinal match in the morning to secure a medal with an impressive third place finish.

But Indonesia's Muhammad Ulinnihar and Della Destiara Haris stopped the Filipinos' run in the semifinals, storming, 21-12, 21-7.

It was the first time the Philippines won a medal in the tough Philippine Sports Commission-organized tournament featuring the up-and-coming shuttlers from some of the strongest countries in the sport.

"We really tried to fight because we know that we are carrying the Philippine flag," said Paz, 17, a food service management freshman at the Manila Polytechnic College, who was competing in his first international tournament like Ramos.

"They (the opponents) were very tough. They are dominating, sa," said Del Rosario, a Perpetual-Silruan graduate from Victorias, Laguna.

The star of their teammates fell by the wayside, however.

Filipino main man Jesper Escueta bowed out fighting to the end, dealing his world-ranked Thai foe Nollanut Suwanan with a first-game win before dropping a 19-21, 11-15, 24-22 decision in the boys' singles quarterfinals.

Escueta had three match points in the third game against the rocky Thai who mustered two runnings from the empire. But the variety proved strong down the stretch for the 14-year-old sophomore from Colegio Bluesweep de Pila, Laguna.

Malaysia's Iskandar Zulkarnain Zainuddin crushed the country's other boys' singles hot, Peter Gabriel Magnaye, 21-13, 21-10.

Magnaye joined with Jonathan Jhon-Jhon Francisco in the boys' doubles and lost to Indonesia's Muhammad Ulinnihar and Rendy Saputera, 21-12, 21-17.

Abigail Marie Garcia and Danica Nadia Cruzhot out in the girls' doubles following a 21-8, 21-9 loss to Malaysia's Lim Jie Yee and Ng Hui Ern.

Caroline Hannah Magnaye and Lloyd Dewey Isaac paired the sparsest squad by the national youngsters who were picked from different clubs and schools in the country.

Paz and Ramos dressed the match throughout against the Thais, posting 11-7 leads in both sets to pull away for good. But they lost steam against the Indonesians, who raced them up in the first set and then easily finished them off in the next frame.

"Meaning pinalo ng latest kasi nalabasan dito yung Thailand (It looked like we ran out of gas, because Thailand was also a tough assignment)," said Ramos.

PETER Gabriel Magnaye lunges for a return.

Additional incentive for UAAP sweep

By Jasmine W. Payo

HERE'S ONE MORE INCENTIVE for a UAAP sweep.

Aside from clinching an outright Finals berth, a squad that wins all 14 eliminations in the Season Finals will only need to win twice in the championship round. Its opponent, however, must win three times.

"A sweep is a rare occasion," said UAAP secretary-treasurer Ben Carlos yesterday after approving the league amendment in yesterday's board meeting at host school University of the Philippines.

"We want to give due recognition to the team that sweeps the elimination round, it's really hard to do," said Ateneo Blue Eagles, Far Eastern University's representative to the board.

The University of the East, unopposed by Brods Pomento, pulled off the four last seasons with a 14-0 sweep to clinch an outright Finals berth.

But La Salle ended up capturing the crown in its best-of-three title series against the Warriors, who were inactive for almost a month as three other teams disputed the remaining Finals slots.

Over a decade ago, tennis completing a sweep earned the championship outright. But the league altered the rule after the University of Santo Tomas unsuccessfully captured the title after winning 14 games in 1993.

"It's okay," Dumpean said of the new rule. "We're still proud of our 14-0 sweep last year. We just have to keep on trying to win the championship."

The UAAP board also decided to suspend the use of the possession arrow in the last two minutes of the game and resort to the jump ball.

The 73rd UAAP season will first roll on July 31 at the Ateneo de Cubao.

Giving all is enough—Cojuangco

By Marc Anthony Reyes

PERFORMING WELL IS GOOD enough, but if they can get the coveted gold medal in the process, it's a lot better.

That was how Philippine Olympic Committee president Peping Cojuangco responded yesterday when asked to assess the country's chances in winning its first ever gold medal in the Beijing Olympics set Aug. 9-24.

"When are our chances? That's hard to tell," said Cojuangco during the lineup in Ramon Fernandez Hall. "All I want to see is for our athletes to perform well. Not that if we fail to win gold or any other medal we should be subjected to abuse.

"The important thing is to show the world that we can perform to the best of our ability. If we win the gold medal, which is our target to begin with, then it's better."

There are 34 athletes in the official RP roster with beach volleyball and archery pacing last-ditch efforts to make it to the Summer Games, according to Cojuangco.

The RP delegation will be 31-strong including the coaches, RP chief of mission Monico Puentevella, administrative head Mayleg Martelino and three members of the medical staff. Cojuangco will be guest of the International Olympic Committee.

POF: Pasig swimmer notches 4 golds

By Jane Navarro

GABRIEL LORENZO CASTILO OF Pasig City captured two more golds to increase his medal collection in the pool to four yesterday in the National Capital Region qualifying games of the 3rd Philippine Olympic Festival.

A high school freshman from Ateneo, Lorenzo ruled the 200-meters individual medley in two minutes and 23.23 seconds and 200-meter butterfly (2:24.11) in the boys' 13-14 years old category after rolling the 400m IM and 100m freestyle Thursday.

"I'm hoping to win more medals in the next few days," said Castelo, who also won two silvers in the 100m backstroke and 1500m free.

Castelo, who admires six-time Olympic gold medalist Michael Phelps of the US, has a chance to increase his haul to eight gold when he competes in the 200m back, 200m free, 100m fly and 400m free.

The 13-year-old from Cainta, Pasig City also impressed scouts with his triple A challenge in the 100m free, 200m IM and 200m butterfly, where his performance surpassed until-the-model's best swimmers in his age bracket.

Meanwhile, Quezon City picked up three more swim golds courtesy of Al-berto Benaghenal, Anna Dominique Barcelona and Jasmine Veronica Ong to match Manila's seven triumphs in the event supported by Vice President Noli De Castro, Pagcor, Accel, Globe, Summit Mineral Water, Negrine Sinsuat, AMA Computer U and Creativity Lounge.

Benaghenal toted the 200m IM for boys' 13-14 years old (2:30.13), Barcelona topped the 200m IM for girls' 13-14 years (2:37.46) and Ong prevailed in the 200m IM for 13-14 years old (2:44.73).

Whitney De secured the lone gold for Manila in the 200m IM for girls' 15 and above (2:26.94).

Manila struck back in Olmo when last year's NCR leg and national finals champions snatched two gold medals in the boys' 14-and-under and girls' open category.

MANILA'S Cole Ryan Limlingan for one of his events against Parañaque's Chelsea Bardon.

Kenneth Bahasan, mentored by PG Cadenas lieutenant Edsel Isidro and another Pasig ace Bahasan swept his five games, including victory win by the 14-year-old woodpusher over teammate John Carvajal.

Ms. Cristina Ortanado teamed another Manila bet Sharyl Marie Gotesimo in the Dyen section over an Hwy Asenjo Macanda of Paranaque edged Angelica Joy Pantogal of Manila to rule the girls' under 14 division.

In women's softball, Manila and University of the Philippines conquered separate opponents and appointed headed to a championship showdown at the Polytechnic University of the Philippines field.

The Lady Maroons, the reigning National Open and UAAP titlists, rallied from runners over Infanta UAAP champion University of the East and La Salle and remained as the only unbeaten team with Manila in the seven-team field.

The Dilman shooters needed only five innings in clinching the Lady Princes, 12-5, before finishing off the Lady Archers, 7-0, for their fourth win in as many outings.

Manila, which will be carrying the country's colors in the San Pablo Big League (16-18), led four FUE 11-1, in the top of the 5th inning when the latter conceded. Coach Ana Santiago of Manila was officially awarded a 7-0 win.

The top performers of this leg will qualify to the National Finals in Cagayan de Oro this October with Ivo Cesar Montero hosting the event.

NCAA Preview

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Third...

"Our 0-3 loss was perhaps more in the mindset. Imagine, I'm totally disappointed. We didn't take a break right after that. We should find what we need to improve and the strong points we can execute. In our last three matches, I'm very satisfied with the results."

Still, Alas stroked his fingers as a "third seed," behind close seal favorite San Beda and four other teams jockeying for second position.

Alas described San Beda as "total above the rest" and picked Jose Rizal University, Mapua, San Sebastian and cementing Philippine Christian University as strong semifinal contenders.

"We still have a chance to make it in the Final Four," said Alas. "The good thing about college ball is it's unpredictable. At any given night, you can win against the strongest teams."

Jasmine B. Payo

Cohesive...

San has used through the years with Magsaysay.

Sophomore Jonathan Bessil is expected to provide the outside threat, after the departure of Jovin Uy. Also returning are Mark Arcasa and junior Trevo Galdez.

Arcasa was the center spot as a potential Waterloo for the Cardinals, whose opponent Neil Pascual, a national pioneer forward, has been effectively converted into a defender, just like last Alamo.

The Cardinals' boast package the best rookie reap after acquiring former San Beda Gabe Ervite Espinosa and Mark Sumaoang, a 6-foot-6 center. They also have Allan Mangahas, the 2003 NCAA juniors' MVP and Reinhoff Soriano, a point guard who hosted his skills in Miami, Florida.

Magsaysay settled for a couple of quarterfinal finishes in the preseason, losing to top UAAP contender Ateneo and the Go Salle in the franchises' stages of the Nike Summer League and the PILOO Cup. Cedrik P. Payo

Final...

team now out of the scene. Mark Anthony Morgan hopes to fill the void left by Ge Loste.

The Dragons are hoping to continue their championship form that included three straight winning bids in back sessions in 2000 and 2002. They finished in a tie of fifth last season with a 6-6 record.

The Stags highlighted their pre-season with a custom swatting win over two-time defending champion San Beda in the Fil-Oil Invitational Cup, where they finished with a 4-3 slate which they duplicated in the Shakey's Summer League.

Cedrik P. Payo

Quick...

since 2004, when they lost to Philippine Christian University.

Colombini is also hoping their pre-season performance will help their upcoming campaign.

"We may have lost many games in the pre-season, but the team effort is already there, especially in our game three more up games against UAAP teams," Colombini added.

The other holdovers in the UPEER roster are Franz Dyuco, John Philip Golabin, Chris Lim, Andy Mejos, Ronald Reyes, Jr. Jogo Sicat and Rudy Yrizri. Cedrik P. Payo

Blazers...

Junior forward Jacob Mayagma will skipper the team this season with Tin Johnson, Jeff Modal, Archie David and Gani Zavilla expected to join him in the starting unit.

Among the notable dropouts were Winston and Dave Vera and Christian Cabatu.

Marcilla expects his team to compensate on lack of size by running tough defense, which the Blazers have shown in their victories over Letran and San Sebastian during the pre-season.

"What's good is that the physical and mental toughness of the team is developing as the skill level also improves. Slowly but surely, we are molding players as a team," Marcilla said. Cedrik P. Payo

Roddick 'chokes' out of Wimby

Kudryavtseva gives Sharapova a 'dressing down'

WIMBLEDON, ENGLAND—IT'S NOT often that a professional tennis player will admit he choked. Andy Roddick, though, pulled no punches after his early exit from Wimbledon.

"My chance 1 got 1 pretty much choked it," the two-time finalist said after Monday's all-but-finished game. Roddick had a chance to serve for a 6-7 (5), 7-5, 6-4, 7-6 (4) win in Janko Tipsarevic in the second round. "That's tough to deal with. It's not an easy thing to say but it's pretty much what happened.

"I could sit here and try to dance around it all night, but it was what it was. It's like you were something so bad, you almost appear to outright."

Roddick wasn't the only big name bounced from the tournament Thursday. Earlier in the day 2008 champion Maria Sharapova was stunned 6-2, 6-4 by 104th-ranked Alla Kudryavtseva, her earliest loss in a Grand Slam tournament since her first full year on the tour in 2003.

The ninth-seeded Roddick, who lost to Roger Federer in the 2004 and 05 finals, has the big serve and groundstroke repertoire to make him a perennial title contender. Instead, he failed to get to the third round for the first time in eight appearances at Wimbledon.

Zero

"I just didn't make anything happen on those tweaks tonight," he said. "Zero, zero, zero."

Despite scraping through the first set in a tiebreaker, Roddick came up short time and time again in trying to break the 46th-ranked Tipsarevic and squandered three set points in the final set. The Serbian player, remarkably, got two break point chances and converted both.

SQUEEZED TOO TIGHT Andy Roddick ponders his latest defeat.

"I played just horrific shots on break points both ways," Roddick said. "I put myself in position to win that match in straight sets. It was just the big moments. I blinked. There's no easy getting around that."

Tipsarevic acknowledged that he benefited from Roddick's frailties.

"I would say that he was tight and this is one of the reasons why, especially in those important moments, I made him play," he said.

The departures of Roddick and No. 3-ranked Australian Open champion Novak Djokovic, who lost the previous day to Marat Safin, would seem to ease the way toward a third straight final between first-time champion Roger Federer and two-time runner-up Rafael Nadal.

The 25-year-old Roddick's ultimate goal is to win another Grand Slam title to go with his solo major—the 2003 US Open. He's skipping the Beijing Olympics to prepare for the clay, with Federer, Nadal and Djokovic dominating the sport this year, the prospects for Roddick may be fading.

"It's almost at this point win another Slam or what," he said. "It's a tough thing to deal with, I think I was trying to prove so much, even from practice, just trying to get to a level where I thought I could compete for this title."

Roddick used a rock & roll analogy to sum up his position.

"You know when you're into the Rolling Stones here's the Beatles now, and then all of a sudden you're now on or right even bash and there's a really tall guy in front of you waving his hands and screaming? You can't see much. It's not going to be as good as the other three.

"That's kind of what you're going to remember. Maybe you get to kind of get some baby steps to get back there."

I don't like her outfit

Sharapova, who has three Grand Slam titles, hadn't lost so early to a major since going out in the first round at the Australian and French Open and second round at the US Open in 2003. Adding insult to the result, Roddick was rushed her glamorous Russian rival's Pinkberry ensemble of matching style blouse and shorts.

"It's very pleasant to look," she said. "Why? Well, I don't like her outfit. It was one of my motivations to beat her."

Asked whether she felt Sharapova might have had offended by the comments, Kudryavtseva hastily backed off.

"If I'm not afraid to go play her and she's world No. 2, I'm not afraid she's going to catch me in the dressing room and say 'You know what, you said you don't like my outfit. You were wrong.' I will say 'Sorry. That's just my opinion.'" AP

THERE SHE GOES, OUTFIT AND ALL Maria Sharapova heads for the exit.

Chinese swimmer fails test, gets ban

BEIJING—CHINA'S TOP BACKSTROKER Ouyang Kunpeng has been banned for life for failing a doping test, a major embarrassment for the host country just 40 weeks before the Beijing Olympics open.

In a statement Friday, the Chinese Swimming Association said Ouyang tested positive for a doping substance on May 1. It gave no details about the substance. The CSA said Ouyang's coach Feng Hongbin was also given a life ban.

Ouyang was not considered a contender for gold at the Olympics. China is supposed to produce few winners in the pool and has seen only one gold medal in swimming in the past two Olympics. The top prediction is probably Ye Penpin's 200 meter butterfly.

Ouyang won three silver medals at the 2006 Asian Games.

China is hoping to overshadow problems leading up to the games—including choking air pollution, chaotic protests on the torch relay and issues of freedom of the press—by topping the gold medal table and overtaking the United States.

Any positive doping test by a Chinese athlete during the Olympics would be a major blow.

"The Chinese Swimming Association has made lots of effort on anti-doping, however this positive test case still happened," the statement said. "It's a big lesson, and we must set a very alert on anti-doping and pay constant attention."

"The Chinese Swimming Association strongly opposes doping and is cracking down on doping to guarantee a fair play environment, to protect athletes' health and guarantee athletes are clean when competing in Olympics."

Chinese swimmers were involved in a series of doping scandals in the 1990s. In the past year, under pressure from the World Anti-Doping Agency, China has begun toughening its drug testing and is also trying to draw lessons from those past embarrassments. Increasing drugs and will strict bans.

The China Anti-Doping Agency recently opened a new laboratory that will do 4,500 doping tests for the Olympics. This is up 25 percent from 40test.

In Melbourne, Australia, a pending swimsuit case has cost Australian decathlete Nicole Chris Jongeward a chance to compete in the Beijing Olympics.

Jongeward won the less-preferred Australian stake in cross-country and had the highest placing last weekend at the world trials, but another title, Samal Mccormell, was given his spot for Beijing.

Jongeward's omission was the only surprise in the 28 skiers named Friday. AP

NBA draft: Bulls make Rose No. 1 pick

NEW YORK—THE CHICAGO BULLS selected Derrick Rose, who grew up on the city's South Side, with the No. 1 pick in the NBA draft Thursday, choosing the Memphis guard over Kansas State forward Michael Beasley.

With Beasley going second to Miami and Minnesota picking OJ Mayo at No. 3, college freshmen made up the first three picks for the first time in draft history.

"We actually talked about this early," Beasley said. "We all grew up together and we all grew up playing against each other and we all made a pact together that we would all be here. Just to see it all fall into place and see it all happen is kind of crazy."

The Timberwolves dealt Mayo's rights to Memphis for the rights to Kevin Love, the No. 5 pick, in an eight-player deal after the draft ended. Minnesota also got Mike Miller, Jason Collins and Brian Cardinal, and sent Antoine Walker, Marko Jaric and Greg Buckner to Memphis.

A person with knowledge of the deal confirmed it to The Associated Press, speaking on the condition on anonymity because the trade had yet to be officially announced.

"We talked too much about it. We really did," Bulls general manager John Paxson said. "Very honestly, at the end when we made our decision, it was unanimous with my scouts and coaches and myself."

Rose is the Bulls' first No. 1 overall selection since they grabbed Elton Brand in 1999. He's the second straight freshman taken with the top pick, following Portland's Greg Oden last year.

Expected to contend for a division title, the Bulls instead stumbled to an 33-49 record and eventually replaced two coaches. But with just a 1.7 percent chance, they were last month's draft lottery, giving them a chance to quickly return to the playoffs.

"It feels great to get in and compete," Rose said. "You just figured to be in that position right now because a lot of people aren't, and just knowing that we are a few pieces away from really contending in a week, it just makes me happy."

Miami settled for Beasley, even though he wasn't sure if the Heat would get the 18-year-old. Beasley averaged 26.2 points, third in the nation, and topped Division 1 with 12.4 rebounds per game.

After Mayo's selection, UCLA guard Russell Westbrook was the first non-freshmen taken, going fourth to the Seattle SuperSonics—with new teammate and reigning Rookie of the Year Kevin Durant standing and applauding the pick from the bank.

Love, past UCLA consecutive picks and the New York Knicks followed at No. 6 with Italian forward Danilo Gallinari, a player Isiah Thomas' ousted coach Mike D'Antoni oversaw. Four in Madison Square Garden owner's improved, hosting loudly.

Indiana guard Eric Gordon became the fifth freshman taken, going to the Los Angeles Clippers at No. 7. Brandon Jennings, a point guard who'd begun to the Joe Alexander, whom she'd begun to the other opening soon at Madison Square Garden to the Big East tournament, went to Milwaukee with the next pick. AP

ROSE

BEASLEY

MAYO

EURO 2008

Spain rips Russia, reaches final

VIENNA, AUSTRIA—SPAIN COACH Luis Aragones has seen enough of his team's Dutch it is ready to face Germany in the final even without the European Championship's leading scorer.

David Villa, who has scored four goals in three 2008 games, missed Spain's final after picking up an early injury in Thursday's 3-0 win over Russia. The Spaniards scored all three goals after Villa was replaced by Cesc Fabregas in the 59th minute, giving Aragones a hint as to what he will do without the Valencia striker in the final.

"We were doing well with our forward. It's better for numbers in midfield, for pressing, and that's how you get. Xavi (Hernandez) scoring," Aragones said. "Make them feel free."

Aragones set up both goals after Xavi scored, first for Daniel Guiza and then for David Silva, giving Spain a shot at its second European title. He came on when Villa sustained a muscle in his leg while hitting a free kick.

"Villa will miss the final," Aragones said. "It's not serious, but he'll miss the final because he has a pull."

But against Germany, Aragones can count on Fabregas, who flicked a ball over the top for Guiza to score with the outside of his right foot high in the 33rd, and then slid a pass through for an unmarked Silva to score from inside the box in the 62nd.

"I know how well he can perform," Aragones said of Fabregas. "He's a player like Cesc, 20 years old and someone who has acquired the experience of someone who's 27, 28. It is, isn't important."

Xavi scored in the 56th minute after an exchange of passes with fellow Barcelona player Andres Iniesta. Defender Sergei Ignashevich conceded the ball into the box for Xavi to side-foot through goalkeeper Igor Akinfeev's legs.

An adversary called Germany

Spain, which won the 1964 European championship, had watched its 'tiki-taka' style of low-passing, short-range attacking but mostly failed to find the back of the net. Spain had scored just two goals in its first two games, both 1-0 victories over Greece and Sweden, before Thursday's rout.

"The team has been strong mentally for a long time," Aragones said. "It's important to not only play good football, you need to know how to score goals. That's what we wanted, to be in the final. But there's an adversary called Germany, that is going to be interesting."

Russia coach Guus Hiddink still has never taken a team past the semifinals, falling in that stage when leading the Netherlands at the 1998 World Cup and with South Korea four years later.

"It was their plan that they were going to make us tired so we couldn't make a first of it in the second half," Hiddink said.

Spain, which beat the Soviet Union, 3-1, in the 1964 final in Madrid, had never lost to Russia in four previous matches—including a 4-1 win two weeks ago in the first round—and it didn't look like breaking that record from the start as Spain topped finishers.

"The team pushed on and I think we dominated the match. I'm very happy about being in the final," said Iniesta, who was voted man of the match. "It's a match that we want to win."

Russia was without central defender Denis Kolodin and substitute Dmitri Torbinski from the 3-1 victory over the Netherlands on Saturday due to suspension from accumulated cards. AP

SPAIN'S David Guiza celebrates his goal against Russia.

SPORTS

Sizzling Juvic grabs Thailand golf lead

Pioneer

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Filipino ace strings 7 straight birdies for 63

CHANG SAI, THAILAND—JUVIC PAGUNSAN FIRED A SLITTER-ing nine-under-par 63 to snatch a one-shot lead from local hero Prayad Marksaeng at the halfway stage of the Singha Thailand PGA Championship presented by Sports Authority of Thailand on Friday.

The talented Filipino sank 10 birdies, including a stunning run of seven in a row at Sandiford Country Club Chiang Mai to vault on top of the ฿300,000 Asian Tour event with a 13-under-par 131 total.

Indeed, Prayad maintained his hopes of a third victory this month with an equally impressive 65, highlighted by a chip-in eagle while Korea's Jin Jeong-kyung charged into contention with a four-under 64 for a 133 aggregate.

The sheer brilliance of the top three players left the rest of the field reeling in their wake, with India's Arjun Singh, Chang Tae-geun of Chinese Taipei, Singapore-based Australian Usher Dark and American Han Lee tying a distant fourth on 137, six shots behind Pagunsan.

Antonio Lascuña, the other early finishing Filipino, stood at 140 after shooting a 68. Mars Pe-ralta (70) was at 142 while Angelo Que (74), Antonio Monasterio (74) and Benjie Magada (77) made it to the weekend after matching the halfway no of 148.

"That was a very special round," beamed the 30-year-old Pagunsan, who claimed his maiden Asian Tour victory at the Perusahaan Indonesian Petroleum Invitational last season.

"I hit it real good and putted very well. It's the first time I've shot seven straight birdies in my career and a first ever 29."

Starting his day from the 10th hole, Pagunsan's game caught fire at the 14th hole where he collected 5th third birdie of the day to add to two earlier birdies and a lone bogey.

He sailed on more birds and narrowly missed equaling the Asian Tour's consecutive birdie record of eight in a row.

Asian Tour Press

US WOMEN'S OPEN

Oh, Hurst set pace; Rosales shoots 74

EDINA, MINNESOTA—SOUTH Korea's Oh Ji-young and Sweden's Sofi Hurst shot 6-under 66's Thursday and shared the first round lead at the US Women's Open, while Jenalee Sorenson struggled to a 75, her highest opening round at the American championship since 1992.

Oh started on the back nine with a pair of birdies and finished her round with another, while Hurst had three birdies on her front four holes to join her atop the leaderboard.

Sorenson, played before the largest galleries of a sun-shine-filled afternoon, but the three-time champion who is striking at the end of the year, made four bogeys in a six-hole stretch and had her worst first round since she played the US Open as an amateur.

Lorena Ochoa, the No. 1 player in women's golf who has won two of the last three majors, didn't make a birdie until the 14th hole in the morning, when the conditions were soft. She rallied with three birdies on her last five holes for a 71.

Jennifer Rosales, who won the Women's World Cup with Dorothy Delasin last January, shot a 74. Delasin did not play.

American teen Michelle Wie, hoping to build on recent momentum, took a quintuple bogey 9 on the ninth hole and shot 81.

Ahorn figured she was headed in a similar direction until one par-saving chip-in.

Or, given that Sorenon former is the afternoon sun, she suddenly a drop on the 12th for bogey and followed that by winning a 4-foot par putt.

Then came a 35-foot birdie putt down the hill that disappeared into the cup, and Ahorn looked up at her caddie in mock disgust.

"It just turned it all around right there," she said. —AP

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BUSINESS

Editor Raul D. Marcelo • Assistant Editor Carrie S. Nemeño

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Asian stocks tumble on oil, financial jitters

Crude tops $140, Wall St. slumps 3%

ASIAN STOCKS TUMBLED YESTERDAY, WITH Shanghai plunging more than 5 percent and Tokyo striking a two-month low as investors dumped shares on worries about high oil prices and the weak US economy.

Concern grew that higher energy costs will eat into corporate earnings and weigh on consumer spending, while heating to higher interest rates that could further put the brakes on global economic growth.

Tokyo shed 2 percent, extending a losing streak to a seventh day, while Shanghai slumped 5.3 percent by the close. Seoul closed 1.9 percent lower, Sydney shed 1.6 percent and Wellington gave up 2 percent. Hong Kong was down 2.1 percent in afternoon trade.

"The fall in the US stock market caused by surging crude oil prices and anxiety over outlook for the financial sector" sparked the selloff in Asia, said Tetsuhiro Segawa, equity strategist at Shikiko Securities.

A weak dollar was also weighing on Japanese exporters, he said.

European markets opened slightly lower, with London blue added to the pressure on the market, with stocks sliding 3.4 percent to a near five-month low.

"Market confidence has been hurt badly by, further weakness is possible over the next few trading sessions," Mega Securities analyst Alex Huang said.

Concerns over new share offers also weighed on Chinese shares as investors received liquidity pressure would further hamper the already weak stock market.

The securities regulator said late Thursday it would assess an application for initial public offerings in Shanghai by Everbright Securities and China

AFP/AFX/JJ

Fitch keeps RP credit ratings unchanged

By Michelle V. Remo and Doris C. Dumlao

LONDON-BASED FITCH RATings has decided to keep its cyclical ratings and "stable" outlook for the Philippines, but warned that the sharp rise in consumer prices here and in other emerging market economies has created downward pressures on their credit standings.

The Philippine credit ratings from Fitch still stand at "BB" for its long-term foreign currency debt, "BB+" for its long-term local currency debt, "B" for its short-term foreign currency debt, and the country ceiling at "BB+". These ratings are all below investment grade.

A "stable" outlook means the country's credit ratings are not at risk of being downgraded in the short term, but neither are they likely to be upgraded.

"Ongoing current account surpluses, driven largely by overseas workers' remittances, are contributing to a steady increase in the country's external debt ratios, and have allowed for a significant increase in official foreign exchange reserves," said Franklin Poon, director for Fitch's sovereign group.

Fitch, which currently has the highest credit rating on the Philippine government among the three major global credit watchdogs, also projected a slowdown in economic growth this year to 5.3 percent from 7.2 percent last year.

It said the Philippine government's fiscal condition was still considered relatively weak, adding that measures were needed to boost internal revenue collection. Although year-on-year tax collection of the government has been increasing, Fitch said it still did not match the growth in expenditure requirements.

The credit rating firm projected that the Philippines would post a national budget deficit this year equivalent to

PHOTOS

SingTel hikes stake in Globe Telecom to 47%

By Elizabeth Sanchez-Lacson and Rita T. Olchondra

CONGLOMERATE AYALA CORP. said it sold 31.8 million shares or 2.0 percent of its subsidiary Globe Telecom Inc. for P4.6 billion to Singapore Telecom International Pte. Ltd. (SingTel) to generate funds to boost investments in the business process outsourcing (BPO) sector.

In a disclosure, Ayala senior managing director Fedhlo Luis Macasaet said the parcel that sold the Globe stocks at P1,318 a share. Globe closed at P1,340 apiece yesterday.

Ayala's stake in Globe will go down to 38.3 percent from 33.4 percent while SingTel's will increase to a little over 47 percent.

Ayala said it intended to re-invest the proceeds from the sale to its BPO businesses and in its electronic manufacturing service (EMS) subsidiary Integrated Microelectronics Inc.

"We're looking at possible acquisitions in the BPO sector as well as some opportunities for IMI in North America and Europe. But we won't disclose the names yet," Macasaet said.

He also said that the BPO sector continued to be resilient given the ongoing global crisis as US companies look toward outsourcing to cut on operating costs.

"Our value as a holding companies lies in our ability to re-allocate and turn over capital in order to start new investment cycles," said Ayala chair Jaime Augusto Zobel de Ayala.

Ayala also acknowledged the strong partnership it has forged with SingTel over the years. The alliance has enabled Globe to be a pioneer in digital technology and in other mobile communications services.

The SingTel Group is Asia's leading communications group. SingTel's main operations are in Singapore and Australia, through wholly-owned subsidiary SingTel Optus. Its other major investments in the region include Advanced Info Service in Thailand, the Bharti Telecom Group in India, Pacific Bangladesh Telecom in Bangladesh, Telkomsel in Indonesia and PT Telekom in Indonesia.

SingTel has some 140 million mobile customers in eight markets, the largest of which outside Asia's home base in Asia outside of China.

Globe also assured regulators that foreign control in the company would not exceed the constitutional limit when SingTel buys the additional common shares.

Based on common shares, Globe said SingTel now has a 47.32 percent stake, up from 44.5 percent. About 33.3 percent of common shares remain with Ayala and the rest is held by the public.

Ayala unloads to fund BPOs

PSE signs pact with NYSE Euronext

By Elizabeth Sanchez-Lacson

THE PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE HAS teed up with NYSE Euronext, the world's biggest stock exchange and the merged operator of Wall Street and the European stock exchanges, which would allow both bourses to share information and expertise to expand their markets.

In a joint statement, both bourses said a memorandum of understanding was signed Thursday to establish cooperation between the two exchanges.

NYSE Euronext chief executive officer Duncan L. Niederauer and Philippine Stock Exchange (PSE) chair Jose C. Yap signed the MOU on behalf of their respective bourses.

The MOU was signed at the New York Stock Exchange and was witnessed by Philippines' Macapagal-Arroyo, who is in the United States on a state visit.

Under the MOU, both bourses will explore new opportunities and share information on trading system architecture and technology, exchange traded products, market participant connectivity and market data management.

It also narrates the PSE's intention to purchase new trading systems technology from NYSE Euronext and its affiliates. Both exchanges will share information and experience on product development as well as explore opportunities to expand markets through mutual links or strategic alliances, the PSE said in its disclosure yesterday.

Jollibee reviews growth program

By Elizabeth Sanchez-Lacson

FAST FOOD GIANT JOLLIBEE Foods Corp. said it was reviewing its expansion program for this year as it sees muted growth with the sharp rise in raw material prices.

Jollibee chair Tony Tan Caktiong said after the company stockholders' meeting yesterday that the group would still expand but not at the same aggressive pace of previous years.

"We are reviewing our expansion for new stores, renovation and concessionaries, to see if there's a need to be more conservative or to still go ahead," Tan Caktiong said.

Jollibee is setting aside P6 billion for capital expenditures this year.

As of May this year, Jollibee opened 51 new stores, spending roughly P528 million or an average of P10 million a store. Of the total, 28 stores are outside of overseas, 16 of which are in China through quick service restaurant brand Fengbo King.

Last year, the Jollibee group—which includes Chowking (Oriental food), Greenwich (pizza and pasta), Red Ribbon (bakeshop), Delifrance (French bread), Yonghe King (Oriental brand in China) and Mang Inasal (quick service restaurant specializing in barbecued)—opened 174 new stores, mostly in the Philippines.

"Maybe we are opening a slightly less number of stores this year," Tan Caktiong said, but did not give more details.

"Our challenge is to keep looking for efficiencies. If overall costs increase by 4 percent, maybe we can get 2 to 3 percent from savings and between 1 and 1.5 percent from price increases. That's what we're doing now," Tan Caktiong said in a briefing.

As a result of higher inflation, executives expect the growth of system-wide sales, or sales of both company-owned and franchised stores, to slow down in the second quarter from the first quarter's 14 percent.

"Our system-wide sales growth year to our growth in the second quarter [this year] would still be lower since it's affected by a higher base," Jollibee chief finance officer Ysmael Reyes added.

Fitch keeps RP credit ratings unchanged

From page B1

2.1 percent of gross domestic product, or about P157.5 billion. The increase is much higher than the government's goal of limiting the deficit this year to only 1 percent of GDP or P75 billion.

"It is critical that the various measures to enhance revenue collection begin to deliver more meaningful results, as spending pressures, which have been successfully managed in recent years, mount," Fitch said. Economic challenges, especially higher cost of food and oil, have forced the government to spend more on social services to help the poor sope.

The Philippine government was able to trim its deficit from 63 percent of GDP in 2003 to only 49 percent in 2003, but Fitch said the latest debt-to-GDP ratio was still higher than the average of 36 percent for countries with the same credit ratings.

Record-high inflation rates have caused a slowdown in the economy's growth of consumption, and the decelerated rise in output, in turn, forces governments to spend more for pump-priming.

"It is the surge in inflation, rather than the direct consequences of the global credit crunch, that is the principal driver of macroeconomic and financial stability in many emerging markets," said David Riley, group managing director in Fitch's sovereign team.

Fitch said faster inflation dragged down a country's creditworthiness because it encouraged investors to transfer their investments to perceivedly more stable economies. Capital flight, it not offset by other sources of foreign exchange, depletes a country's dollar reserves that are supposed to help it pay off obligations denominated in foreign currencies.

"Rising fuel and food prices are also causing government budgets under pressure as subsidies become more expensive," Riley said.

In the case of the Philippines, the Arroyo administration decided to abandon the goal of balancing the budget this year after economic managers agreed to increase public spending to compensate for the drag-down effects of inflation to overall growth.

The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas also recently raised its key policy rates to 5.25 and 7.25 percent for overnight borrowing and lending, respectively. The move was aimed at preventing a further rise in year-on-year inflation, which hit 9.6 percent in May, the fastest in nine years.

The latest inflation rate prompted the BSP to admit that the official target of limiting average inflation within 3 to 5 percent was no longer attainable. It expects inflation to average at 7.4 percent this year.

"With consumer price inflation in several emerging market economies now significantly above official targets and accommodated by ample liquidity, the risks of a wage-price spiral as inflation expectations shift upwards is increasing," Riley said.

The accelerated rise in overall prices of goods and services was fanned on tightening supply of oil and rice on the world market, as well as increasing global demand led by the growing economies of China and India.

Fitch said central banks in the Philippines and other emerging market economies were faced with the difficult task of raising interest rates to curb rising inflation and boost the slowing growth of their economies. While raising interest rates could help temper inflation, such a move has an ill-effect of dragging down growth.

The risk faced by several central banks is that the failure to maintain inflationary pressures will result in downward pressure on exchange rates—especially if the Fed surprises with earlier than its 321 interest rates—leaving policymakers with the unenviable choice of either allowing currencies to depreciate, which is rate-will-under inflation further or intervening in support of their currencies and raising interest rates much more aggressively with negative consequences for growth," Riley said.

Asian stocks tumble on oil, financial jitters

From page B1

Stock Locomotive and Rolling Stock Corp. on Monday.

Indian shares plunged more than 4 percent in morning trade while Philippine share prices ended down 2.3 percent.

"The downturn was caused by 'whall Street, inflation and high commodity prices," particularly oil," said Jose Ocampo of AB Capital Securities Inc. in the Philippines.

"Investors are worried about the rise of commodity prices, like oil. That rekindled inflationary concerns. Fund managers are concerned about the impact of inflation to Asia," he said.

The dollar was slightly higher against other major currencies, clawing back some of the previous day's losses.

The dollar edged up to 107.16 yen in Tokyo afternoon trade from 106.73 in New York late Thursday. The euro slipped to $1.2732 from $1.2756 but firmed to 136.54 yen against 136.18.

AFP

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Gross premiums reached 22.7 billion, a 15.9% increase compared to 2006. Sales of innovative breakthrough products surged. New products that provide consumers with superior value including protection benefits and higher earning potential over the long term largely accounted for the growth.

Bargain Hunting & Cost Averaging

Savvy investors often say buy low, engage in cost averaging, avoid realizing paper losses and hold on to fundamentally good investments for the long term to maximize gains.

Many savvy investors find opportunities in crisis and engage in bargain hunting by buying more stocks when share prices are low. Some categorize behavior to consider shopping when there is a sale or mall. In simple terms, buying or investing in sound equities funds when the market is down is like buying during a "sale" as one receives more shares of stocks or units when prices are low.

Some variable life products of Philamlife like AIG Money Tree allows investors to time their investments and decide to periodically top-up and practice bargain hunting or cost averaging.

One of the more popular key investment principles practiced by savvy investors and sought in investment management is cost averaging. This essentially means building up stocks regularly and investing periodically so one can weather regardless of market conditions so over time the costs are expected to average out. What is more important in this approach is the continuous cost regularity of saving and investing to systematically build wealth.

A number of investment-protection products of Philamlife enables consumers to regularly invest and build up wealth and overcome their investments over time.

Smart investors avoid realizing paper losses by holding on to their investments long term instead of cashing in and actualizing losses when prices are low. Financial advisers generally agree to holding on to fundamentally sound investments for the long term.

Historical performance data has consistently supported the generalization that over the long term, equities have generated higher returns over fixed investments. Volatility is a given and expected when it comes to a number of investments especially equities. The key is to diversify wisely, choose fundamentally good investments, engage reputable fund managers and take a long term position.

DISCLAIMER: *Diversification mitigates risk but does not insure against loss.

Bread prices to hold for next 3 months, group says

By Rosend N. Domingo

LARGE BREAD COMPANIES said they expect prices of their products to stay stable for the next three to four months due to the moderation in international prices of wheat.

Serafin Ursua Jr., president of the Philippine Baking Industry Group (PhilBaking), said global wheat prices dropped to a one-week low on speculation global stockpiles would increase as growers plant more to take advantage of higher prices.

PhilBaking group companies that own the following brands: Lawson Square, Le Coeur de France, Gerry's Bakeshop, Wabbo/Real Good, Tomas Donuts, The French Baker, Gardenia, Julie's Bakeshop, Dunkin Donut, Fortune Bakeshop, Tiffany and Mr. Donut/BFC.

Citing data from the United States Department of Agriculture, Ursua said global wheat production this year was expected to reach 662.80 million metric tons, up 8.5 percent from the previous year's level.

"The USDA also reported that the United States, as major wheat exporter, is forecasting to increase production by 16 percent, from 56.2 million MT to 65.2 million MT," he added.

Further, Ursua said durum-like had also started planting wheat and output was forecast to jack up by 83 percent or 24 million tons by yearend.

"The increase in world wheat harvest is expected to drive prices downward during the later part of 2008 until 2009," he said.

Ursua said that PhilBaking, along with the Filipino Chinese Federation of Bakery Association and the Philippine Federation of Bakers Association, would propose efforts to meet any further planned price increases of flour millers considering the global wheat mood.

He explained that flour prices were up by more than 66 percent to P980 from P589 per bag last year.

"Increased flour prices prompted four members (3 to increase the cost of their bread products, but by only 25 percent," Ursua said. "Partially absorbing the increases was the bakers' effort to make single breads within the reach of the consumers, however, this took a toll on numerous bakeries closing down due to financial losses."

"With increased planting, improved weather conditions and coming in of wheat harvest in the months of August and September, we expect that flour prices will go down," he added.

Clark gets 5 more daily flights to HK

By Ronnie Dreja
Inquirer General Luzon

CLARK FREEPORT—THE DIOSDADO Macapagal International Airport got 6,388 of the weekly 21,000 seat entitlements that the Philippines received following the two-day air talks with Hong Kong that concluded here on Thursday.

It was the first time that DMIA received such an allocation, according to Transportation Undersecretary Dennis Reyes II, chair of the Philippine panel.

Weekly seats to Manila rose to 15,000 from 13,000 while Cebu got 2,000 seats, Reyes said.

Hong Kong can also bring in 23,000 passengers to various points in the Philippines as a result of the talks, he added.

The DMIA share means five flights daily or 35 flights weekly, according to Victor Jose Lacsina, president and chief executive officer of the Clark International Airport Corp., the same agency overseeing the development of the former US military airport.

Lacsina said overseas Filipino workers and their families would directly benefit from the Clark-Hong Kong flights.

The arena spelled out in the memorandum of understanding were signed by Reyes and Francis Chang, chief of the Hong Kong panel.

The "ultimate aviation industries" in the two countries led to the resumption of discussions that were last held in 1996, aviation officials said.

In a statement, Chang said "both countries have shown a sincere commitment in responding more opportunities for the aviation industry that would ensure more liberal flights."

Hong Kong has future plans to invest DMIA which Lacsina said would serve the Clark-Hong Kong route.

Lacsina said the 6,388 seats for DMIA would be implemented in two to three months.

In the recently held Philippines-Cambodia air talks in Manila, the Philippines was allocated 21 flights weekly and eight of those were shared with DMIA.

The DMIA can accommodate two million passengers a year, but plans are underway to boost the capacity to seven million yearly.

Traders still reluctant to import rice

Private firms, farmers' groups deterred by high price abroad

By Amy R. Remo

PRIVATE TRADED TRADERS were still reluctant to import duty-free rice, offering to buy only 52,114 metric tons of the staple, during a tender held yesterday by the National Food Authority.

Fourteen private firms and farmers' organizations participated in the tender held in Manila—the third such bid the food agency conducted this month, involving 250,000 tons of rice.

Offers during yesterday's tender brought this year's total importation by the private sector to 616,114 tons, out of the 800,000 tons the government had allowed for private sector importation.

The NFA had considered five tenders so far this year. In May, the most awarded grains-importing agency held two tenders for 150,000 tons of rice, under a treasury-specific quota. Under the quota, local traders can only import rice from Thailand, China, India and Australia.

"Rice prices are still probably too high for the private sector to import," NFA assistant administrator Conrado Ibañez commented.

Even when the NFA offered an incentive to importers in the form of a service fee rebate, the response from the private sector remained lukewarm, with traders importing only 23 percent of the allotted volume.

Rice importation was opened to the private sector as an added measure to ensure supply for the basic commodity.

In light of the high prices of rice in the world market, Ibañez said traders whose shipments would arrive on or before July 31 would get a refund of P1.75 a kilo of the three thick sacks fees.

The NFA would also refund traders whose shipments would arrive between August 1 and 15 P1.50 a kilo of rice.

Most grain traders have shown an unwillingness to import rice since the first private sector tender in May 9, deterred by high international prices and competition from government-subsidized sales at home.

As of June 25, prices of Thai 100-percent B-grade white rice, the world's main benchmark for global trade, was quoted at $850 a ton.

Ibañez had said that the low level of interest being shown by traders might also indicate that there could be enough supply in the market.

The Philippines, which has become the world's biggest rice importer, has already procured 2.3 million tons of rice as of mid-June, following the closing of a deal with Vietnam for the purchase of about 600,000 tons.

"The 2.3 million tons of rice we have contracted is already sufficient to tide us over for the rest of this year," Ibañez explained.

ENVIABLE VIRTUES
An Ifugao woman wearing the traditional tnalogyan called the rebat appears to command attention as she tends to her vegetable farm. The Ifugao province native Botanic farmers from mud and rain. Banaue is probably the only place in the Philippines where there is no public markets. Farmers and fisherfolk share their harvest with neighbors.
MARIANNE BERMUDEZ

Though wages are higher, RP productivity seen lower

By Doris C. Dumlao

FACTORY WAGES IN THE Philippines may be higher than that in other parts of Asia, but the country is still the only key manufacturing center in the region where labor productivity has faltered over the years, a research by global consultancy firm Mercer suggested.

In a study on human competitiveness covering six emerging markets—the Philippines, China, India, Indonesia, Thailand and Vietnam—the Mercer study showed that the Philippines was handicapped by relatively higher labor costs in the manufacturing sector. Still, growth in factory productivity has fallen from 2.3 percent between 1995 and 2000 to a marginal 0.9 percent between 2000 and 2005.

"The good news is, in the Philippines it is still in the middle of the pack as far as labor productivity is concerned," Mercer managing director for Asian In-Hin Wong said in a briefing.

Productivity, the gross domestic product or output of each person employed, was noted to be stronger in Thailand among the countries in the set.

Wong noted that the Philippine manufacturing sector was paying more for both management and front-liners than its competitors in the region.

Annual base salary for factory managers was shown to be at par with counterparts from Thailand or China, but the pay scale was much higher for rank-and-file workers. Because of the high educational attainment of the workforce, she said, Filipinos were able to command relatively higher wages.

She said the migration of skilled workers could affect productivity in the short run, but in the long run, reverse migration could benefit the country like what is happening in China and India.

"Productivity is not only a factor of the individual, it's also a factor of the environment, the organization, the quality of training, investments and equipment," she said. "To remain competitive, the challenge is basically how to improve labor productivity so as to go for able to keep providing higher base salary and wages to workers over time," she added.

Island village near plant gets power after 10 yrs

By Yolanda Sotelo-Puertas
Inquirer Northern Luzon

ILOG, BATANGAS—MORE THAN 10 years after the fuel power plant started operations here, residents of an island about a kilometer from the power station would finally enjoy electric power.

Ruben Llorens, manager of the fuel plant, said it took a long time to energize Caballitos Island because an undersea cable had to be installed to connect the island to the town.

Tesda Energy, which operates the 1,200-megawatt fuel-fired power plant, bought the 1.3-km undersea cable for P10 million.

In 2004, Tesda Energy provided a power site set to the island so 320 families there could have electric power. The residents contributed money to buy fuel for the generator set, which was operated for only three hours a night.

During special occasions, like Christmas and New Year, residents would switch off light bulbs in their houses in that celebration so the village plaza would have enough power supply for lights and music.

But with the installation of the undersea cable and power connection to the main grid, residents can now enjoy electricity 24 hours a day.

"Many families started buying appliances, like television sets and refrigerators," said Arnora Cera-Calanoran, public relations officer of the power plant.

The project was completed in March and has started benefiting Caballitos residents.

Calanoran said the residents were organized into four cooperatives that would take charge of collecting electricity payments.

Pure Foods sees flat '08 growth amid tough times

By Dixie L. Locsin

PUBLICLY LISTED SAN MIGUEL Pure Foods Co. expects its sales and earnings for this year to come in only slightly above last year's due to the weaker economy.

Speaking to reporters after the company's annual stockholders' meeting, Pure Foods president Francisco Ho Lim said he expected the company's performance to be "not much higher" than that reported in 2007.

Company officials declined to give revenues or earnings targets for this year.

But last year, the San Miguel Corp. subsidiary sold P63 billion worth of processed food for an annual increase of 17 percent.

"This is because raw material costs are rising," he said. "The prices of [animal] feed, grains, corn and soybeans have all increased."

Ahjo echoed comments made by company chair Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco Jr. that the food manufacturers and distributor will see only "modest" growth this year, despite an 18-percent annual sales growth to P116 billion in the first quarter of 2008.

Pure Foods, which sells processed meat products and instant food and beverages, is counting on the traditional strengths of fourth quarter sales to meet its goals this year, Ahjo said.

"About 30 to 35 percent of our sales happen during the holiday season," he explained.

To make up for the higher raw material costs, however, the Pure Foods chief revealed that the company has had to progressively increase its selling prices.

He said the price increases have ranged from adjustments of 3 to 18 percent, depending on the product.

Despite the tough economic environment, however, the firm will continue to invest in capacity building.

In particular, Ahjo said Pure Foods will spend P1.3 billion on its piggery operations. The money will be used to expand its feed mill and other operations.

Pure Foods' piggery business is the same unit that ran a P1.3 billion worth of writedowns after the firm expunged from its books all bad inventory and uncollectible receivables.

"This was a one-time charge," Ahjo assured. "It was part of our cleanup."

COJUANGCO

DA expects lower corn production this year

LOCAL CORN PRODUCTION MAY slow down this year as the Department of Agriculture expects less farmers to plant the grain in the next few months due to high costs of farm inputs.

"We may have to revise corn growth targets this year to 10-15 percent," Agriculture Assistant Secretary Bernie Ansaldo said.

In an interview, Ansaldo said the government had initially targeted corn production to grow by a hefty 18 percent to 7.862 million metric tons from last year's production of 6.737 million metric tons.

Apart from the damage in crops wrought by the recent typhoons, the high cost of farm inputs like fertilizer has discouraged farmers from planting corn, Ansaldo said.

Fertilizers already cost P1,900 a bag, he added.

Ideally, corn farmers use at least 10 to 12 bags of fertilizer per hectare of land. This means that they will have to spend as much as P22,800 a hectare for fertilizer alone.

Ansaldo explained that the decrease in areas planted to corn could significantly hamper production this year.

"But this is not a hopeless case," he said. "In fact, we are now carrying out measures that we can still reach our original target growth."

For one, Ansaldo said, agricultural officials already had talks on Monday with the Land Bank of the Philippines to open a new P5-billion, no-collateral credit window to feed millers and rice millers, for the benefit of corn and palay farmers.

Normally, feed millers borrow from banks and will finance the farm inputs needed by corn farmers, who, in turn, will pay through and from the sale of their produce.

Earlier, the Department of Agriculture was bullish on hitting an 18-percent growth in the sector, expecting that more farmers would produce and earn more due to the tight supply of corn worldwide.

Agriculture Secretary Arthur C. Yap had earlier explained that demand for the crop had increased after it was learned that it could be turned into raw material for biofuels.

He likewise noted the growing dependency on the crop due to soaring prices of corn substitutes including wheat.

For 2008, the DA had allocated P658 million for the Gintong Mangyanang Asi corn program, the bulk of which would be used to provide farmers with seeds, irrigation and post-harvest facilities.

Amy R. Remo

People, Events & Products

Edwin Arles Espinosa

Globe, Every Nation Leadership Institute launch new LIFE SIM

GLOBE AND EVERY NATION LEADership Institute recently launched the new LIFE SIM, the customized SIM specially made for all the members of Every Nation.

The GPH prepaid SIM, which stands for Leadership, Integrity, Faith, Excellence, makes it easy and affordable for members of Every Nation to communicate with one another.

Using LIFE SIM, members of Every Nation will enjoy a special SMO rate of 75 centavos for LIFE SIM to LIFE SIM texts and 10 centavos per second when calling other LIFE SIM users.

The new SIM was distributed during Every Nation Campus Ministries' Campus Harvest Manila '08 May 22 to 24 at Philippine Sports Arena, where thousands of young members of Every Nation gathered together for their biennial conference. The event was sponsored by Globe.

Globe held a game—Ring Me a Trivia...during the Campus Ministry event where contestants who called in with the correct answers to the trivia got Globe ding bags, highlighter sets, pen sets or P500 call cards. Nokia 2600 phones were also raffled off.

The Battle of the Nerds Bands was also held where the top three contestants performed and judged on originality, audience impact and overall, and adherence to the theme "Live Life to the Full". Globe's National International sales head Raya Bun and segment business managers Ethan Kay Sanchez and Cris Garcia were among the panel of judges. The members of the group with the winning LIFE song all got their own Nokia 2600 and a certificate from Globe.

Globe, as the partner of Every Nation Leadership Institute, helps strengthen relationships and enriches lives through relevant and convenient communication services. With the new LIFE SIM, Every Nation members will be able to easily get in touch with one another using Globe's affordable call and text services. Later, they can request more new and exciting services from LIFE SIM made exclusively for Every Nation members by Globe.

GLOBE prize-away Nokia 2600s at Every Nation Campus Ministries' Campus Harvest Manila '08. Shown, 2nd from left, is Ethan Kay Sanchez, segment business manager of Globe, receiving one of the winners of the phones as he joins the hosts at Campus Harvest on stage.

Power and art at the 2008 Honda Accord launch

PHOTOGRAPHY shows Hideaki Tokuda, Honda Accord chief engineer of Honda R&D Co. Ltd., Tokushi Inoma, president and CEO of Honda Motor Co. Ltd. Asia, Benjamin Sanvictores, chair of Honda Philippines Inc.; Lisa Maruja Picazo, Honda Philippines and artistic director of Ballet Manila, Amb. Alfonso Yuchengco, Presidential Adviser for Foreign Affairs and chair of the Yuchengco Group of Companies, and Hiroshi Shimizu, president and general manager of Honda Cars Philippines Inc.

STAGE actor Audie Gemora and drummer actor Nikki Beez regale guests with their music.

IT'S WHEN GRACE MEETS POWER, when the reliable classics blend with the most modern technology, when beauty and might happily collide.

The recent launch of the 2008 Honda Accord was all those and more, as car enthusiasts and curious spectators alike flocked to witness the unveiling of the 2008 Honda Accord in two events, amid ballet, music and photography, at the hotel Philippine Plaza.

Honda Cars Philippines Inc president and general manager Hiroshi Shimizu welcomed the enthusiastic crowd by giving a sneak preview of what the 2008 Honda Accord, touted as the most powerful ever, was all about.

Also present to grace the car's Philippine debut was Astro Honda Motor Co. Ltd. president and CEO Tomohiro Ogawa, who is based in Thailand, and Honda Accord's chief engineer Chikashi Hikoto who came all the way from Japan.

The day's event saw the local motoring media marveling at the features of the 2008 Honda Accord (both the 3.5 and the 2.4 editions). Among those were long-awaiting every detail of the car were motorsports racing legend Frederic Ramirez, veteran TV hosts Butch Gamboa of "Motoring Today" and Ron delos Reyes of "Item Review", and columnist Boy Langit of DWIZ and Our Mornings of UGMA.

The evening party on the other hand, was capped with a compelling performance by prima ballerina Lisa Maruja Picazo and Ballet Manila, followed by the enchanting piano renditions of twenty keys virtuoso Dean Reed Benito.

Another highlight of the launch was the unveiling of photos of the 2008 Honda Accord captured through the lens of ace advertising photographer John K. Chan.

Even host Audie Gemora, himself a seasoned thespian, serenaded the crowd with his enchanting Broadway musicale medley. Capping the night's program was the most powerful sounds: Robert Sena who declared in his Jekyll and Hyde anthem "This is The Moment" that indeed, that night was the right moment for this most luxurious car to start hitting the Philippine roads and begin impressing car enthusiasts.

When removed the most eye-dazing the evening event, however, was the "star" of the show. When the drove Honda Accords valveled in, the enthusiastic crowd rose from their seats and started gravitating towards these works of art and technology.

Even impressing the 2008 Accord were Ambassador Alfonso Yuchengco, Presidential Adviser for Foreign Affairs and chair of Yuchengco Group of Companies, Ambassador Benjamin Sanvictores, chair of Honda Philippines Inc, Yvonne Yuchengco, president of Malayan Insurance, and Peter Ng, executive vice president of House of Investments.

Also curiously marveling at the car were Alfonso Salcedo Jr, president of SPI Family Savings Bank Inc; Lope Fernandez Jr, president of RCBC Savings Bank; Rene Almeda, president of Manila Tytana; Raymond Acosta, COO of Starlig Pharma Corp; Liliane Delarola, president of ACE Asia Inc; Nenjie Evangelista, general manager of Hotel Philippines Inc, and beauty queen Ann Mirriam Quimbao.

Obviously with the news the new Honda Accord received that day, this car will continue to be the talk of the town for a long, long while.

FIRST LIFE MEETS WITH INSURANCE HALL OF FAMER

FIRST LIFE president and CEO Peter G. Sycuip, Q.C. (first from right) hosts top company producers in the Manufacturers Life Insurance Co. (Philippines) Inc. Million Dollar Round Table Qualifying Conference in Hong Kong. Shown in the photo with the insurance industry stars and highly sought-after international industry speaker Barry Hewlett (4th from right) with First Life's (from left) Ronald Tan, Rhoanne Ang, Lourdes Yao, Jessie Gandeza, Lorna Lua, Patricia Lua and Alberto Chua. Hewlett is a top general agent for Northwestern Mutual Life Insurance Company USA and enshrined the Financial Management and Development learning courses of the General Agents & Managers Association, a program that honored the development of countless agents in the U.S. He is also a Gems Management Hall of Fame Award Winner.

Ateneo offers entrepreneurship program

THE ATENEO GRADUATE SCHOOL OF Business' (AGSB) Center for Continuing Education (CCE), led by its executive director Daniel Glenn Jim Lua, and the ACE Center for Entrepreneurship and Management Education, led by its chair Dr. Edmundo Misalucha, recently forged the dust for the Ateneo Applied Entrepreneurship Boot Camp (ACE-Bootcamp) at the Ateneo Graduate School of Business in Rockwell Drive, Makati City.

The course is a 10-day intensive training-workshop for entrepreneurs who have a strong desire to bring their enterprises to the next level of development and success. But besides training and developing aspiring entrepreneurs, the program also aims to support AGSB's anniversary theme "Our Century in Our Business". According to program director professor Antonio M. del Carmen, the program will not only enable entrepreneurs to be efficient and innovative in their enterprise management but it will also contribute significantly to nation building through job creation, wealth distribution and talent integration.

ACE, on the other hand, has also strongly advocated the socio-economic development of the country through continuous entrepreneur creation for the past 10 years. As such, ACE's gurus Dr. Edmundo A. Misalucha, Dr. Alejandro J. Ferreras, professors Emilio A. Antonio, Tomas R. Lopez and Francisco M. Bernardo III are proud to have helped rate to success hundreds of local entrepreneurs through their unique training approach.

The Applied Entrepreneurship Boot Camp, also supported by Go Negosyo and Bankard, Inc.

Hitch, will start July 21 and will be open to a limited number of participants. For inquiries and registration, interested entrepreneurs can call 890-2042, 890-1742, 437-3886, and 437-6043. E-mail ace.dlsb@gsb.ateneo.edu or ace_justice@yahoo.com, or register online at www.ace.ateneo.edu.

XanGo partners with Tuloy Foundation

MANAGEMENT CATEGORY CREDIT to XanGo LLC recently announced a new partnership with the Tuloy Foundation in the Philippines. Founded through the company's worldwide philanthropic program called XanGo Goodness, the initial donation will help support Tuloy's valuable mission to provide housing and education to orphaned and abandoned street children as well as schooling to out-of-school boys and girls from indigent communities in other metro children's centers.

"The Tuloy Foundation serves a much-needed role in the Philippines, helping to integrate neglected and abandoned children back into society," said XanGo vice president of public relations Bob Esposito. "XanGo is pleased to continue its mission of helping children in need around the world, and we anticipate a successful partnership that will allow XanGo distributors to become involved and help support this worthy cause."

Founded in 1993 by Father Rudy Evangelista, the Tuloy Foundation has grown from a small room at the

DIGNE, from left, are postmaster Gamba S. Antonio, president of ASIT-ME Inc. Dr. Eduardo A. Morato Jr., chair of ACE-ME Inc. Rosario Glenn C. San Luis, executive director of Ateneo CCE, and Alberto L. Buenviaje, dean of AMSB.

G. Arlan Rosen Parish Compound in Makati City to a major facility in Alabang that provides education to nearly 600 children, with many of these also receiving residence means. Tuloy hopes to expand its capacity in the future to accommodate up to 1,000 children each year.

XanGo Goodness is a cause-related philanthropic movement that mobilizes XanGo's global resources to help children and families in need. XanGo Goodness advocates a get-involved mindset that recommends more "check-writing" and encourages the company's employees, distributors and partners to roll up their sleeves and make a difference. XanGo partners with worthy charities around the world and also provides humanitarian relief.

SCIENCE/HEALTH

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Editor: Cesar O. Mangosing

Text us your feedback: inquirer has one to give by messages to 2327 (Globe) or 381 (Smart)

Productivity goes up for 30,000 DOST-assisted Pinoy startups

By Tess R. Salazar

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY has spread to wrings over various fields, one of which is among Filipino microentrepreneurs.

Ramon Baguisa Jr., owner of Mapagmahal Foods Inc., a former wholesaler and distributor of Philippine frozen concoctions, decided in 1998 to produce and market his own calamansi juice, supplying schools and company canteens, airconditioned groceries.

With an initial capital of just P100,000 to finance infrastructure expenses, and 300,000 cash on hand, Baguisa found it difficult to maintain his manufacturing facilities and system, which involved workers manually squeezing the calamansi. Though the workers started the day with much enthusiasm, the tedious chore lasted three to quit a few days later because of work fatigue.

Training and machinery

Baguisa then signed up with the Department of Science and Technology's technical assistance training, and learned the necessary basics about processing machinery from the department there, as well.

Within a month, he found his monthly production volume increased from 6,000 bottles to 15,000. "In two days, we were able to produce what previously took us five days to make," he recalled.

Production volume was not the only positive effect. Shelf life also increased from 90 days to one year, since the finished products were "sterilized" with the latest equipment.

Today, Mapagmahal's Lemonade not only markets to major malls, restaurants, health centers and country clubs, but could also be bought from the US mainland. Guam, Hawaii, Saudi Arabia and Korea. The clientele base has increased to 25 percent of the local market, and the production for export from 10 to 40 percent.

Technical assistance

Baguisa's Mapagmahal Foods is just one of the 1,500 companies in the National Capital Region supported by the Department of Science and Technology through the technology support and provision of equipment.

Dr. Teresita C. Fortuna, regional director, DOST-NCR, said P23 million was allocated to 39 startup companies under the innovation support system.

She stressed, however, that DOST is not a funding agency. "We are more focused on technical assistance."

Fortuna also explained that micro-entrepreneurship included backyard businesses such as making home-made preserves (traditional sweets).

Nationwide, the DOST has been assisting 30,000 firms. Under the agreement, startup companies are expected to pay back the equipment provided by the DOST on reasonable terms.

Recognition

Baguisa's company has reaped not just financial rewards. Among the awards given to Mapagmahal is the Best Lemon Juice Manufacturer for Metro Manila by the National Council for Product Service Quality, the Customer Today Magazine, and the national Product Quality Excellence Awards. The Asia Pacific Awards Council also cited the company's brand "Good Sense" as 2008 Outstanding Client Beverage Products Brand.

Eleven-year-old Merry Cookie Inc., a 186-person Filipino-owned restaurant/food services company, availed itself of the DOST Small Enterprise Technology Upgrading Program (Setup) in 2009 and found much money under the program. Since then, its production went up 100 percent. Its market outlets grew from 16 to 65 nationwide.

Mary Cecilia opened its first Bistro restaurant in 1998 and another in 1999. It eventually ventured into producing bottled gourmet goods in 2001.

Also successful

Other successful companies were Mon Food Products, specializing in the production of palayaman, Marina's Food, atchara or pickled papaya, peanut butter and bagoong (anchovy) making; and Fredelle Bistro Corp., owner of frozen cooked and other cuisine-based products. Fredelle's production capacity soared from zero to five tons per day through a nonassisted working and vending concession/area lessee.

Another enterprise is Marvenatore Corp., maker of iced tea concentrates using the brand Alimyeza. It underwent DOST training in hazard analysis critical control points, good manufacturing practices and shelf-life studies of food products. In five months, its gross sales increased 50 percent.

Saving more Pinoys from diseases prevented by vaccines

By Charles E. Bahao

EACH YEAR, MILLIONS OF children and adults in developing countries die from diseases that could have been prevented by vaccines that readily available today.

One of the most common causes of these vaccine-preventable deaths is a bacterium known as pneumococcus that could attack different parts of the body.

When bacteria invade the lungs, they cause the most common form of community-acquired bacterial pneumonia, while bacteria invade the bloodstream, they cause bacteremia (presence of bacteria in the bloodstream that may eventually lead to blood poisoning and septic shock), and when they invade the covering of the brain, they cause meningitis. Pneumococci may also cause middle ear infection as well as sinusitis.

These diseases are not only damaging to the human or could cause hearing loss—they often lead to death.

Not many are aware

"Although the medical community have long been aware of pneumococcal diseases caused by this bacterium, not many parents are aware of how common they are," said retired Dr. Cecilia Montalbo, professor of Philippine Society of Microbiology and Infectious Diseases.

According to World Health Organization, pneumococcal disease is the No. 1 cause of vaccine-preventable death among children under five years old, causing one-fourth of some 9 million children per year worldwide.

"While children aged 2 years old and above are particularly vulnerable, Christian Apostolic Church adults, they generally have weaker immune systems and do not have the right antibodies to combat the bacterium, anyone could get pneumococcal disease," Montalbo clarified.

Other groups

Another groups also at risk are the elderly, aged 65 and above and those individuals with weak immune systems due to cancer, leukemia, human immunodeficiency virus, or those who have chronic illnesses such as lung, heart and kidney disease and diabetes.

"Indeed pneumococcal diseases have harsh consequences on the society as a whole and anyone would be at risk. However, as a vaccine-preventable disease, the current available vaccine has the potential to eliminate these dangers," Montalbo said.

The doctor added that while pneumococcal disease is most often treated primarily with penicillin, the emergence of pneumococcal strains resistant to one or more of these commonly used antibiotics, placed further emphasis on the need for preventing pneumococcal disease through vaccination.

Best way

The best way to protect against pneumococcal disease is through immunization. For example, Pneumococcal Polysaccharide vaccine (Pneumo 23) could be administered to children as young as 2 years old, to high risk individuals and for all elderly 65 years old above.

"Pneumococcal vaccines are considered clinically effective and safe in adult, polysaccharide vaccine for example, has been shown to be effective in the prevention of invasive pneumococcal disease, offering protection against 23 of the most common pneumococcal types. Immune responses contained in the vaccine account for nearly 90 percent of pneumococcal disease," the doctor informed.

Pneumococcal disease is spread through contact between persons who are 10 or more years old. Symptoms include chills for 10 to continuous for people, especially children, to many the bacteria in their sinuses without being sick. Also if they don't use eating utensils, kiss or when children put shared toys in their mouths.

Since it is generally difficult to diagnose pneumococcal diseases as symptoms may be similar to the symptoms of the common cold—don't be alarmed if the doctor would immediately suspect pneumococcal diseases based on monitoring exhibited symptoms.

The doctor could confirm this through specific laboratory tests on spinal fluid, blood or sputum.

Claws (not quite) like a cat's

DISCOVER

Maxxie Santos Ballon

SOME AFRICAN FROGS DON'T LIKE being picked up, and express their displeasure by clawing the handler.

Harvard University graduate student David Blackburn learned this the hard way when an encounter with one such frog left his bleeding. Only then did he understand why Cameroon hunters and spouts when they captured frogs.

"It's surprising enough to find a frog with claws," Blackburn said in a statement. "Cameroonian hunters tell me long spurs or tendons to avoid touching these frogs. Some have even reported shooting the frogs."

After returning to the United States, Blackburn studied museum specimens of African frogs from 63 species and found that 11 of these species had claws. His findings are in the recently published online on journal Biology Letters website.

Not the first

In the paper, Blackburn and his fellow Harvard Biologists noted that they weren't the first to notice the frogs' claws—other researchers had noted this over a century ago, but weren't sure if the claws were bones jutting out of skin due to swollen digits, or if they were actually part of the frog's anatomy. It wasn't until 1931 that researchers suggested that the claws might exist for a reason, though the idea that they might give frogs "a sure grip before hopping" was later discounted.

And then about 30 years ago, the incident occurred, Another researcher, one who'd actually held a live frog and likely had an experience similar to Blackburn's, suggested that the claws were for defensive purposes.

The claws themselves don't look very intimidating, pictures suggest. But they'd stick out of such frog toe the same way the sharp little points on a lobster's paws. Blackburn and his colleagues think the frogs can use their claws as often as the cats do though.

"We suspect, since the frog does suffer a fairly traumatic wound, that they probably use these claws infrequently, only when threatened," Blackburn said. That's because as far as they can tell, using the claws means the frogs don't just have to break their own bones to free each claw from the toe to which it's attached, but the claws also have to break through skin to get at the enemy.

"Most vertebrates do a much better job of keeping their skeletons inside," Blackburn noted. "These are the only vertebrate claws known to pierce their way to functionality."

Remarkable regenerative capacity

As painful as the process sounds, the big per question is what happens to the frog after he breaks out the claws. Right now the researchers don't quite answer that.

Because only studies museum specimens were thoroughly examined for the report, Blackburn and his colleagues aren't sure whether or not the frog flexes intact like, say, a cat's or claws of the X-Men's Wolverine. They think that the frogs do the ability to disarm their claws when they're in pain, but they don't know how long the process would take or how it would occur.

The bone close they say, could retract into the broken skin, though they're not sure if the frog could still decide to do claws much, or if the process is irreversible. The snagged colleagues theory that held the claw to the toe bone would regenerate to increment them again until the next use, and then the skin itself would heal and close. All of this, they said, is to say that claws retain a possible because of what they describe as the "remarkable regenerative capacity" of amphibians like those frogs.

Blackburn is now planning to study live specimens of the frogs to find out what happens after the claws come out. Hopefully none of them will be drawing any more of his blood as he studies his anatomy.

E-mail the author at rsantos@mnnis.com

Get the advantage of health

CAREPLUS

Christine F. Lanuza

How is the light side of the past;
And whatever of life hath ebbed away
Comes flooding back with ripples clear and strong.
How the heart is so full that a drop overfills it.
We are happy now, because God wills it.
—James Russell Lowell

I LOVE THIS TIME OF THE year. A time when we take stock of our personal and professional growth and transformation... and on course or do we need to right our roadmap to success? A perfect opportunity for introspection and renewal.

As an important part of this midyear assessment, I made an inventory of the various cards in my wallet. Aside from my driver's license, credit card and two ATM cards, I found a total of eight membership cards ranging from those of restaurants, several supermarkets, hotels and airlines. Was it worth maintaining all these cards? Absolutely. These rewards-type plastic cards of various colors and designs open "doors" every time I avail of their establishments' services, points that accumulate and eventually translate to "rewards."

Patient card

The latest, definitely the most unique, and possibly the most important addition to my collection of membership cards is the St. Luke's Health Advantage Card. A patient card from St. Luke's Medical Center designed to make healthcare more efficient and convenient, the Health Advantage Card is a fast, secure and efficient way of identifying patients.

It facilitates speedy access to and retrieval of patient data, thus ensuring more efficient services in various areas of the medical center. Unlike in other hospitals where a patient has to share the information from before being issued a patient card several days later, the St. Luke's Health Advantage Card is issued to the patient free of charge upon admission.

The Health Advantage Card streamlines repetitive questioning prior to and during admission to by preventing duplication of patient information and medical records. The card's built-in ownership stores the patient's name, birth date, personal identification number (PIN) and medical records like number. To access a patient's personal records, authorized St. Luke's personnel simply insert the Health Advantage Card in an integrally-hosted card reader or to Online Patient Inquiry Kiosk.

The card can be used in all St. Luke's services that require a PIN in accessing the system. That, a patient only needs to present his/her card to the cashier, who enters his/her unique PIN code prior to admission and no longer has to answer the same set of questions over and over again to the nurse of his or her attending physician. It is necessary in convenience in most hospitals.

Patient safety guaranteed

With the Health Advantage Card, patient safety and convenience of care are guaranteed. To maintain absolute confidentiality all personal records are encrypted and safely stored in the hospital's system. Although data records like number, PIN and medical records like number. To access a patient's personal records, authorized St. Luke's personnel simply insert the Health Advantage Card in an integrally-hosted card reader or to Online Patient Inquiry Kiosk.

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hospital personnel only.

"Collecting and storing patient information is a data intensive but vital undertaking for any hospital," explains St. Luke's President and CEO Jose G. Lubrano, "implementing an efficient and customer-friendly patient information system requires an interactive approach and we are able to accomplish with the St. Luke's Health Advantage Card."

"My St. Luke's Health Advantage Card ensures a quick and hassle-free hospital admission through its express check-in and concierge services features," says elected entrepreneur Pinky Tolentino.

With all the advantages it provides, my St. Luke's Health Advantage Card will definitely find a permanent home in my wallet.

For feedback, please e-mail the Healthcare Technology and Customer Information Bureau at tcib@stluke.com.

CHENNET and entrepreneur Pinky Tolentino loves her St. Luke's Health Advantage Card because it makes her healthcare more efficient and convenient.

Restoring our heritage: Taking the cue from Gion

WHENEVER I VISIT ANOTHER country, I look for spots that show the heritage of that particular place. My search is most fulfilling if it brings me to an area where a country's past is encapsulated in its architecture. I do not want to see something reconstructed or replicated; I prefer to see the real structures or they are used in everyday life.

In Japan, for example, I made sure I saw Ueno, an old district in Kyoto, whenever one was still local for rustic wooden buildings and quaint tea houses of the country's middle ages. Walking along the cobblestone streets of this traditional Japanese village is like walking in a time warp. Occasionally, you will see ladies in beautiful kimonos stepping gingerly on their tall wooden clogs, reinforcing the impression that you have traveled back in time.

Historic charm

The design of the wooden structures is also preserved from the original state, thus enhancing the historic charm of Ueno. Traditional Japanese architecture, outside of temples and castles, pulsates with a simplicity and charm in a living, working subdivision of a slice of their past. The effect is body noble and ennobling.

Preserved

Although not the whole of Japan is as charming as Ueno, this particular district was preserved to show to the world how life once was and the effort definitely attracts the tourists. So, from Beijing to Kuala Lumpur to Seoul to, Honolulu, there is a Japanese atmosphere here from felt as well.

On the other hand, it saddens me to compare Gion with some areas in Manila. Its rare house of many excellent colonial and quasi-colonial-style buildings, unfortunately, however, technology is slowly used in very subtle ways. Wood may have been replaced with a fireproofable chemical so as to conform to local building codes. Lighting is of fixtures, using energy-saving fixtures. Exhaust systems are ill-concealed to minimize unpleasant odors.

I was so surprised to see the condo spewing crystal clear, flowing water, undoubtedly due to the first-sewerage treatment system set in place. The community guidebook all those directions just to maintain the natural, old-world charm in a living, working subdivision of a slice of their past. The effort is body noble and ennobling.

Long gone

To add insult and injury from groups who should know better, tenants and malls signs also abound, quite a number of eyesores and basement offices, or billboards of politicians growing enormous a happy nose over. On the streets, you will see potholes, open drains, uneven walkways and the ubiquitous bits of litter. Long gone is the glory and style of the true old Manila. What we have is a parody of only that but lost its past due to ignorance and negligence.

There was a time when Manila was the prime destination in Asia. Manila streets were in its charming gas lamps. Trees flourished on sidewalks. Roads were of pucks china cobblestones. Hugh was where it should be, in well-maintained metropolises. I saw an old photo of the Escolta when it was paved with cobblestones. Imagine how excited about to haunt strolling and chats!

Just imagine the effect if the electric cables are concealed, the walkways are revitalized, green belt is replanted, and the lighting is improved. We may be able to restore murals and repairs to original charm. This is our heritage. This is something in which we can take pride.

It could be our complacency which prevents us from making things better, for not aspiring for perfection. It is a sad indictment of us Filipinos that as long as something works, even if it does not look good, then it is deemed all right. But as long as we have electricity, it does not matter that the cables are strung out as long as the water pipes are laid, never mind the unsightly mess we leave on the streets. This is the attitude of engineering consultants I am strongly opposed to work with. I am certain the average Filipino finds the same frustrations with entire public workers.

I believe there is still hope. We are as par with other countries in our ability and skill to create a first-class development. Pilipinas are usually used is the determination to maintain our sites in the way they were envisioned. Changing the face of our heritage sites and maintaining their cleanliness are an ongoing challenge, but one that will be well worth it, both for tourists and for our collective pride as a people. I sincerely hope that we can ensure the Old Manila area is to its original glamour and, like Gion, restore it to a place tourists desperate.

Komatsu. The owner of the ancestral home, featured in the June 14, 2008 article titled "Contemporary Mary" in the Lyan family and tell the Gerpio family. The featured home was built by Prof. Emiliano Luna of Pampanga and Mrs. Remigia Carpio Luna of Pasay. Serena Nuevo, in their passing, it was given to their youngest son, Cesar Carpio Luna, which he resides with his wife, Edna. One of their children is Sofia Luna, the chef de cuisine and owner of Ito-ya Fusion Cuisine. Pls apologies for the error.

PHOTOS from Gion diaries, Kyoto, Japan

For your comments, please send e-mail to mamoldgon.mom@yahoo.com.

Brittany's Avant at The Fort redefining green architecture

GREEN CHIC HAS FOUND ITS RIGHTFUL place among the skyline of the country's fastest growing commercial district.

A proud member of Vista Land & Lifescapes Inc., the country's largest home builder, Brittany's Avant at The Fort—a pioneering development that espouse the philosophy of green architecture.

Last remaining area

The 38-story residential condominium occupies the last remaining area within the much-sought after gated triangle in Crescent Park West, the prime community at the heart of the Bonifacio Global City. Every single unit has an unobstructed view of the metropolis.

Furthermore, the structure was designed to take full advantage of the sunlight. The residences were oriented in a manner to maximize ventilation which ensures ample ventilation in all areas—even in common spaces like corridors that are usually left unattended.

"We are constantly pressed to innovate at The Fort. It is a development that truly has a profound effect on the property industry since we have pushed the bar further than anyone before us and have set the new standard for what luxury living in the metropolis means: socially responsible firms as well," said Vista Land President and CEO Jing Gerwanas.

Centerpiece

As the philosophy of green architecture implies, Avant is designed with many garden areas in mind. But unlike other properties where green spaces are often found only on ground level, they are replicated to make the dwelling "one-day a the limit," to boot.

A centerpiece of this unique development is the Sky Garden on the 31st floor. Under the masterful hands of landscape architect Paolo Calderon, this will be a relaxation area with an oasis literally in the middle of an urban jungle. The space can also be used as a function room by the residents for their exclusive activities.

"The difference of Avant from all other high-rise condo developments is the fact that you are never too far from the outdoors—unlike in the other high-rise gardens we have and lower gardens and roadside gardens, all carrying the same patterns of plant materials to create a continuity of experience," explained architect Albert Pia.

Amenities

Located at the ground level is a free-form pool that can be enjoyed by everyone.

A fitness center and a sauna nearby will be dedicated to encourage more robust facilities complements the relaxation and rejuvenation that the area provides. A lanai and a spacious garden complete the picture especially for residents who want to soak up the sun outside their respective units. Also nearby is another convertible function room where more events and private parties can be held without disturbing the other residents.

Fitness buffs can enjoy a great workout with the best fitness equipment at the gym on the second level. Whether working with weights or running the treadmill, they can enjoy working in a serene while overlooking the swimming pool below.

AVANT interiors speak of the elegance of modern living

THE GRACEFUL dysphony of ecology and urban functionality **dominance in Avant at The Fort.**

COMPRISING the Gen Estate team are (standing from left) Wai Hing Wong, vice president for project development; and Edwin F. Siongco, VP for construction management; (seated from left) Peter S. Canoy, VP for construction management; Miriam D. Reighbuh, president and COO; Francisco H. Guzman III, chief and chief executive officer; Manolo R. Mendiz, chief financial officer.

Industry giants back metro's impressive 3-tower dev't

THE BEACON, THE NEWEST HIGH-RISE residential condominium in Makati City is impressing an enthusiastic New public with its unique, chic beautiful result of its commitment to quality driven construction excellence and value for money proposition for buyers.

This is the key to The Beacon's achievement as it is attributed to the towering figures behind the project, led by real estate giants Francisco Lavarez II and Miriam O. Reighbuh. Teaming up with another icon in the construction arena, DH Corp., they make up the brains and brawn of Makati's newest (but sought after development.

Forces behind project

Francisco H. Lavarez is the founding president of Studio Land Inc. (SLI). Taking for SLI for nearly two decades, Lavarez helped shape the company to become one of the biggest real estate developers in the country. He also served as presidential adviser for Clark-Subic development. In chair of New Manila Resources Management Inc. (The Beacon developer) and Gen. Estate Development Corp., Lavarez is enjoying a new level of opportunity in the property development scene.

Reighbuh is equally seasoned in the real estate industry. She was behind the development of Newtek, a signature project of SLI in Cubao being used as the basis of the planning, development and management of major SLI-operated malls within the metropolis and in Cebu. She now brings her valued expertise to the fore as president of Ortiz Edifice and New Pacific Resources Management.

Bringing the value of commitment, quality and affordability to DH Corp. With more than 70 years of experience the company is dominant presence in the construction in the Philippines. A member of the prestigious SM Group, DH has a diverse portfolio of experience in project management and general construction.

Several top-notch firms also lend their expertise bringing The Beacon to the forefront of property development: Arya Design, Associate Boutique Inc., Asia Technodata (ATM C2, Aurora Engineering, DL Gamboa Engineering, M.A. Ala and Partners, Figueroa & Associates, De Salvador F. Reyes, SIBH Consultants, CDSC Engineering Corp. and Mobitech Philippines.

Visit the showroom at the corner of Don Chino Roces and Amaia Avenue, Makati City.

Robinsons helps drab apartment turn into bachelor's paradise pad

THE CIRCUMSTANCES appeared like a cut from a popular reality TV show: two different guys with different interests living in the same apartment. If remember Kevin Santos, certified public accountant (IT) Martinez, interior design student Ivan Robles, market-guidance executive Ismael Rodriguez, Adrian Robles and marine biologist Raimundo Dizon.

Adrian inherited the place from his cousin and despite being considered a bachelor pad, it needs to give it up. "This has been a halfway home of sorts—a place where my friends can run to anytime," he said.

The guys have been sharing ever since of coffee after a long day's work. Since they felt the old, dark apartment was no longer conducive for relaxation, they took their chance and let the drudging out in coffee shops that left a dent in their wallets. Thanks to Robinsons Department Store and Real Living, their apartment was transformed into a posh pad.

Before the makeover

The pieces of furniture were mismatched and the plain walls and ceiling were in complete contrast to the red cement flooring.

The glass draughts, dresser's dusty shelves, harmless lamp and books piled up in the bachelor pad's living and the kitchen's cupboards screamed for a makeover.

Simply put, the existing décor was a curious table where one there are interesting coffee table books, classic that some they got from a flea market and a few pieces from various holiday and a striking candle tray from Robinsons Department Store.

The black lounge chairs accented with orange cushions blended well with the white walls and the grey paint splashed into the once washed out walls.

Curtains, elegant lampshade, cup pieces and a glass coffee lounge plus the brown basin/guest floor pillows and area rug from Robinsons Department Store served as subtle accessories. The rustic set does influence the interior space. Accessories like blinds, plant vases, candles and several chic glass paintings from Robinsons Department Store paved the look they wanted for their living room.

At the dining/kitchen area, an ultra chic drop light, Kitchen Standard with the tan accent pulls chrome dining table, and chairs from Robinsons Department Store and wooden bowl organizers and freshly painted cabinets. The contrast shades, fruit basket, wine rack, spice shakers, glass plates, wine lights, stainless steel bowl, essential books from Robinsons Department Store breathed excitement into the space.

Even the guys' bathroom got an extra touch with shower curtains, curtains, bathroom set and bath mat...all from Robinsons Department Store.

JEFFREY Santos and Adrian Robles, two of the five housemates who now share the joy of having a newly refurbished pad.

Editor Cesar D. Mangosong

PROPERTY

THE FOUR STORY Eastwood City Mall will be home to more than 250 upscale boutiques and specialty concept stores.

MEGAWORLD'S Eastwood City is an award-winning "live, enhanced Libis" urban landscape—presenting the living, working and leisure environment that allow families to enjoy life and for businesses to thrive and grow.

Eastwood City:

Laying out the blueprint for Megaworld's rise

Text and photos by Charles E. Bahar

LOCATED AT THE SOUTHeastern corner of Quezon City, Libis was so much out of the way that if you're not a resident or riding with a group of thrill-seeking street racers, you won't be interested in going into the area.

"But no place is too far off or uninteresting for a visionary like Andrew Tan, chair and CEO of Megaworld Corp., who in 1998 applied for a special economic zone license with the Philippine Economic Zone Authority (Peza) to transform a portion of Libis into something that was still unheard of in the country at the time," recalled Kevin Tee, Megaworld Commercial Division head.

By 1999, the construction of the country's first IT park, Eastwood City Cyberpark, was in full swing, ushering in the birth of the Philippines' business processing and outsourcing sector.

"Today Eastwood City is not just home to the country's largest BPO community (Gear

Megaworld has set itself apart by... introducing fresh ideas in the marketplace

in 17 hectare land area, it is now a premier residential, business, commercial and entertainment city where one could live, work, play and learn," described Kevin, who is the eldest son of the chair and CEO.

Most efficient

He added that such a concept provides the most efficient use of land and gives people the best value.

"By locating residences, workplaces and commercial centers in one setting, people may be able to live better, richer and fuller lives. Everything is equally accessible," he explained.

At the moment, Eastwood City is home to over 80 firms—comprising multinationals such as Siemens, Dell, IBM, Citibank and eTelecare—while employing more than 30,000 professionals.

Based on data from Peza, Eastwood City's BPO firms registered $238.00 million (P10.14 billion) in export earnings last year, making it the country's leading IT park.

Residential projects

But this is just part of what is emerging in Eastwood City Megaworld has just finished a number of its residential projects there, including the Grand Eastwood Palazzo, Eastwood Lafayette, Eastwood Excelsior, One Orchard, Eastwood Legrand, Eastwood Park Hotel and Eastwood Parkview.

"We are expecting more than 24,000 residents to be living inside Eastwood City by 2010. Add the daily traffic of office workers as well as mall, restaurant and party goers, Eastwood City is indeed, a city within a city," described Jericho Go, SVP of Megaworld's Business Development and Leasing Division.

By this season, Go said the development of the four-story Eastwood City Mall is total.

"The Eastwood City Mall will be home to more than 250 upscale boutiques and specialty concept stores, which will complement Eastwood City Walk 1 and 2 as well as their sister Cybermall," Go described.

Indeed, Eastwood City has become Megaworld's proof of concept, laying out a blueprint for the company's rise as a developer of megaprojects in Metro Manila that includes Forbes Town Center in Bonifacio Global City, McKinley Hill in Fort Bonifacio and Newport City at the Hillsense Air Base in Pasay City.

"Megaworld has set itself apart by challenging old conventions and introducing fresh ideas in the marketplace. While people would doubt us about our move in Libis a couple of years back, we were able to show them how capable we are in finishing what we have started and in realizing what everyone of our developers out there are still contemplating," Tee said.

Red Ribbon
Must-try
Ensaimada
The melting texture of soft dough lightly sprinkled with sugar, and lavishly topped with melted butter and grated cheese. delivers warm, fulfilling and satisfaction.
You'll definitely love the new improved, softer and more luscious, Ensaimada from Red Ribbon.
It's more beautiful with Red Ribbon

This week Super means sports• stod• ictures• uro• ead

COMPLETE WITH SUPER

Game Super phase

Sports roundup

by James Gabrillo

page B1

Footballistic

by Tats Dias

page C1

shoot me, shoot you

by Pam Pastor

page C2

FIT WITH SUPER ▸▸

Pilots: Finn Pardo, Sid Phil, Katrina A. Holgorano
Final Officers: Tats Dias, James Gabrillo, Wenggie Gallego, Joana Maralian, Paolo Flores
Air Traffic Controller: Abel Montes
Cabin Crew: Baker Bonoyan, J.A. Michelin, and Segovia
Ground Control: Mo ann dorn and Lilit Lucero

Turning the tables

By Pam Pastor
Photos by Jil Lejano

YOU'VE SEEN THE BILLboards, the posters and the ads. Victor Basa penning a Hoja in your direction. Rambo about to take your picture with his Bishops.

They're promoting Penthoppe's newest campaign—one that aims to put the spotlight on the customers and not the models. With the theme the Importance of Individuality, Penthoppe aims to supply people with clothes and accessories that can be mixed and matched to help them stand out in a crowd.

The newest collection, which is inspired by the New Silver movement and anti-establishment icons like The Runaways, The Core and Blondie, targets the generation's non-conformists and fun rebels. So fun and frills—just bold graphics, funky colors and a lot of attitude.

Super and Penthoppe invaded Oh Shoot! Toy Camera Shop one Sunday and models Dawn Balagot and Mimi Ingalla were shot with the new campaign highlighted in their campaigns. Hoja, Bishops, LCA and TLA—each shot of each fits camera's unique, just the way every individual should be.

Penthoppe says, "Shoot you?" We say, "Yes, shoot you!"

Local brand Penthoppe turns the tables on its customers and puts the spotlight on them in their newest campaign 'Shoot You'

OLIVIA and Rosa wear clothes from Penthoppe's newest collection.

Crowd standout

MEET 20-YEAR-OLD DAWN BALAGOT—CULinary student, Penthoppe endorser and crowd standout.

Dawn, who first joined Penthoppe when she was 15 years old, got her modelling break by interning in the office.

Madonna meets Gwen

"I love the 90s look!" said Dawn when asked to describe her personal style. "I love black and bright colors. I'll say, half Madonna and half Gwen Stefani with a bit of Ani Rose!" Fun imagine. I don't see that as a bad thing at all. I can never be one girl—only when required."

I'm busy with... school and work.

I never leave home without... my phone, my Swarovski charms, a necklace with a teddy bear that was given to me, my driver's license, my wallet, my iPod, chapstick for my lips and a hair tie. Hahaha!

I love... my people because... I love everything about Penthoppe! I don't just love the collection but also the people I get to work with. They're all so nice and I consider them as my other family.

My favorite pieces from the current collection include... the hoodies and the colored skinny jeans! I also love the shirts made for the guys. I get sense of my style from the guys' section.

I am sometimes described as... everything about me. I do seriously think I am extremely interesting myself or Exclusive which is a cooking school. I want to learn how to cook other things besides bacon!

Five things people should know about me: I am outgoing, loving, approachable, down-to-earth, and a happy-go-lucky girl.

Three synonyms to... independent, easygoing, passionate, open-minded and stylish.

24/7 SUPER Radar

By Janine Cuenca-Davis and Xiel Juan

FEEL SORRY FOR PEOPLE who will be stuck in traffic—WHATEVER it is that makes you feel good about yourself and get your jolly moving—at the **Bonifacio Global City** in the Glorietas 3 vicinity (Ayala) today! Lessons start at 10 a.m. and will continue until 9 p.m. for BGC, you get two belly-dance workshops plus a feeling. If dancing in the middle of the mall in front of the Saturday shopping crowd sounds embarrassing, be assured that you'd be having too much fun to notice. Head over to Glorietas, or call All at 0917-624-7534.

SEE IT. are all around you and look to the creative aborigines at **Art in the Park** in Ninoy Aquino Park, Salcedo Village, Makati, from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m today. It's just a few steps away from the Jaime Salcedo Market. Brave your way through the art lovers, collectors, enthusiasts and browsers and, who knows, find a unique artwork. Paintings, prints, photographs, sculptures are all priced below P20,000.

Return at 5 p.m. for the first-ever Art After Dark art festival and enjoy the mellow jazz music from Vince Lubrio's saxophone stroll. Till 9 p.m. Shop for art from artists and art groups like Agnes Arellano, Space Philippines, Instituto dei Gallery, Charlie Co, Art Cabinet and Alliance Française.

Proceeds from Art in the Park and Art After Dark will go towards supporting the projects of the Museum Foundation of the Philippines and the National Museum. For more info on Art in the Park and Art After Dark, contact Mercedez Tuerondes or Elvie Bhagaya at 404-2665, or send an e-mail to info@museumfoundationph.com.

HEAR a sonic force beyond tonight at the special screening of Jocelyn Wicks' award-winning short film **Tahimik** at the UAlbay, in the basement of Fully Booked Bist Bonifacio High Street. Bolbon Julio (Sid Lucero), a common man living in a future where everyone is controlled, trained and fearful lives, so he follows the instructions of a voice telling him to go beyond what the world is telling him to be. Viewing starts at 8 p.m.

EXPERIENCE the purity of the **Ministry of Sound** late tonight at Mikuni's A Venue. This is another party with Big Phil Manila featuring Jon O'Bir, Marcelo Dantes, Anthony Lee, MC Lorraine, and a surprise DJ from Vandit Records. Wear all-white party and prepare to dance in a sea of white threads until dawn. For tickets, call 632-7782 or 632-8220.

TASTE your way to France without leaving the Philippines by attending the **Embassy Visit de France 2010** from July 3 to 4 at the Spiral Function at the Sofitel Philippine Plaza. Savour the specialties from the actual Tour de France stages Bretagne, Normandie, Auvergne, Languedoc, Provence, Dauphiné, Lyonnais, and Paris. For tickets and reservations, call 832-0998 or e-mail fleurevalcon@softechmail.hi.com.

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WAY TO KEEP YOUR KIDS HYDRATED

Water is said to be the source of all life. That is true especially for babies and children. Even inside a mother's womb, water helps cool the core body temperature, protecting the fetus from excessive heat during pregnancy.

And did you know that children are more vulnerable to the effects of dehydration than adults? Kids' bodies overheat more frequently because even though they have a lower capacity for sweat, their hydration needs are not that different from adults.

As such, parents and carers should encourage children – especially active ones – to drink often. Aside from serving water during mealtimes, they should teach the child how to drink water even before he gets thirsty. And while they are playing, they should be given water every 15-20 minutes.

Here are some other tips to maintain proper hydration at home:

1. Keep track of how many glasses of water your kid drinks in a day. Ideally, you should follow the 8x8xtea rule.
2. Pack bottled water in your kid's lunchbox. Since they can be physically active in school, it's welcome in variety.
3. Some juices and milk – they are the next best alternative to water. Even shakes, popsicles, chocolate milk and drinkable yogurts provide decent hydration.
4. Treat your kids to water-filled fruits. Watermelons, grapes and oranges are packed with flavor and full of water.
5. Start and end the day with water. Water is fun during sleep, so make sure your kid drinks something before bedtime and when he wakes.

Of course babies should still be breastfed, since they get their water through mother's milk. That makes it more important for breast-feeding mothers to maintain a good hydration regimen.

Since water is so important, it's always better to be on the safe side. Wilkins Distilled Water follows a set of high-quality standards administered by Wilkins goes through a state-of-the-art purification and distillation process to be enclosed environment to ensure that the water comes back in its original form – H2O. That means Wilkins has no dissolved solids, chemical impurities, microorganisms and other harmful bacteria. Untouched by human hands, it is then packed into sterilized bottles that are automatically sealed to prevent any contamination.

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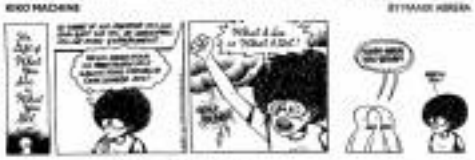

BEN

BY DANIEL SHELTON

DAILY CROSSWORD

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Half-time report

From page B1

THIS SEASON, SWISS SUperman Roger Federer is out to capture his sixth successive Wimbledon title. Rafaelnix shockingly lopsided defeat in the recent French Open Final have led many to believe that this is Rafael Nadal's year. However, I think Federer's grass court prowess will still outshine the Spaniard's kill.

It's the way he wins, as much as the fact that he keeps on doing it, which has earned Federer the awed respect he currently commands. At his early twenties he's also making a timeline his game has an abbreviated expiration.

Federer's is a no-power game: he won't match Nadal's 130mph serve, he doesn't bother with double-handed personal strokes and he says he feels a lack of killer instinct at the net. But as anybody who watched him obliterate Nadal's in the Wimbledon final years ago knows, Federer is the most gracefully aggressive player on the unemotional circuit today.

He "mixes game" has thrown an enviable poise recently as his presence elevates play. Big crowds, big matches, big points... nothing seems to faze the guy.

In his sport he says, "The easiest aspect of my game is a huge advantage and it's good to be a large size/average height (more I need to be very impulsive on court, screaming, shouting, throwing the racquet, I had to figure that out. My low was very low. I knew I was losing too much energy acting that way. I had to take time, you know, become a man."

(SEE TWO) 3A

100 Kwentong Peyups

A day in the life of a Registration Volunteer

Half-time report

From page D3

Formula One

I really think that Kimi Raikkonen is the worst guy in the racing circuit today. We don't blame him and still him money, you forget geeks, if he lost to Felipe Massa in the last Formula One race in France. It wasn't Lewis's the chap's fault.

The first 59 laps were Kimi's. Brazilian Massa trailed him the whole time. Unfortunately, by the 59th lap, the Finn's #2008 developed an exhaust problem that caused him the win. Luckily, none of the other racers ever got close to Kimi so he still finished with a decent 2nd.

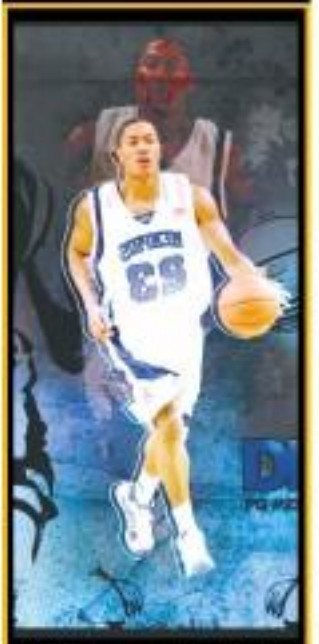
Meanwhile, everyone's bet—McLaren's number boy Lewis Hamilton—was a big, big disappointment, finishing a poor 10th, behind David Coulthard's Red Bull.

The game has never been more unpredictable, more competitive. Exciting times lie ahead.

UEFA Euro 2008

They did it in 2002 [and almost made it in 2006] and here they are again—the German squad has somehow managed to prance their way into the finals. What a joke. In their semi-against Turkey, the latter obviously ones played down from sure to Fa-ish. Which is not to say that Turkey played shite here. They played well, all right, but if you really think about it, they only came close to scoring once—when they hit the bar early in the game.

Germany celebrated Philipp Lahm's last minute goal that gave them the victory. BBC's resident sports guy Phil McNulty states, "So much credit must go to Turkey for a magnificent effort that deserved so much more." Okay, okay he's right.



NBA Draft 2008

It's definitely one of the most underrated sports events of the year. I'm writing this a few hours before the Chicago Bulls pick their first man in the Madison Square Garden in New York City.

They're probably getting Derrick Rose. While Kansas State's Michael Beasley possesses an equally explosive athleticism, I'd be shocked if they didn't pick Rose. It's the most logical move, really. The kid's an athletic sensation. He's great—he deserves how he grew over his last [illegible]—but [illegible] doesn't make him surefire his own skills.

But of course, it may be wrong. This is, after all, one of the most confusing drafts ever. It's too hard to predict where the rookies themselves are [illegible] with the real qualities of the players.

A little trivia. The Bulls only had a 1.7-percent chance of [illegible] the right to the most [illegible] pick. But they got the privilege of doing so. This is the second biggest upset in the history of draft lotteries—just a little bit behind the '93 win of Orlando Magic, who had a 1.5-percent chance.

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When sleep hits the fan

The trials and travails of the rare devoted Pinoy football fan

TALKING ABOUT FOOTBALL in this country is like discussing Greek Philosophy on the set of "Eat Bulaga." You're bound to elicit a blank stare and the executive "Eh?"

I step on and introduce myself as a visitor from outer space whenever I bring up the Euro 2008 or the World Cup in a station where the only team spirit that matters to the one who rule you here or there are orange rubber ball shaped as boys. It is a good story that I've learned to live with, the fact that soccer is quite now may be immensely popular all over the world. Even a cosmopolitan hub like Tokyo is a small village in Horse Soccer, yet be considered a rare, even elite diversion in Manila. I have yet to visit Bonnie Sierra, the town in Cebu dubbed "the Philippines' football capital" but my morning elevator mates' familiar faces. When I first read about that in the news, I almost shed a tear.

So the best thing to do is to find other sick minded, rare species like "The Many Scorer Fan" to commiserate with. Most especially during quadrennial, bi-annual moments of football festival, you're like the ongoing Euro 2008 — one needs to find solace in fellow disciples, who are almost as numerous as those guys on people who can explain the Nash Equilibrium in John Nash's Game Theory.

3 o'clock habit

There are certain tactics we have to spot a devoted football fan. One way is to look for the symptoms of sleep deprivation. But, bleary-eyed eyes, disoriented body rhythm that look like they

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Experience the Seven Bowls of Tea at Royal Tea House

CENTURY PARK HOTEL IS INTRODUCING A relaxing destination where anyone can enjoy invigorating and authentic tea selections direct from the tea farms of Yunan and Hefei Hunan, China. Located on the lower lobby, Royal Tea House is also the ideal place to savor a moment of rest. Royal Tea House is serving two different types of tea: Pu Ed and Dark Tea.

Thinking of a gratifying gift for a tea lover? Choose from one of the four well-known teas in a beautifully presented box, such as the Red Jin Jun which has fuzzy stems and golden leaves with silver lettering. Another type is the Tie Guan Yin which is said to be one of the earliest teas in China and is considered the most popular blend for the early generations of tea drinkers in the Philippines. While the five styles has a quick onset of bitterness, it is followed by sweet taste that dwells in the mouth. But Ji Guan or white rock combo has a rich chestnut taste and becomes color orange after brewing. The last type is the Tieci Yin which is full bodied in texture, dense and no note of bitterness. All of these types has exceptional whiff of lovely fragrance, with a price of Php520 each for 50 grams.

Drop the notion of instant red tea and replace it with a nourishing tea break. With this age-old beverage, you will never feel guilty about reaching for the sugar. Experience these flavorful and healthy tea selections only from Royal Tea House of the Century Park Hotel.

Royal Tea House is located at the lower lobby of Century Park Hotel. For inquiries or reservations, please call 474- 8700 or 528-8300.

Cozy rainy day weekends at The Malayan Plaza hotel

THE MALAYAN PLAZA HOTEL CHEERS UP THOSE gloomy rainy days with its special two-day rain weekend promo. Book for two nights between Friday to Sunday from June 13 to July 31, 2008 and get free breakfast and for P5,500++ and get a third night free. The third night can be availed of right after the second night, or can be converted to a gift certificate for future consumption. This special rainy day package also includes daily buffet breakfast, buffet lunch, local beverages, and free use of the swimming pool and Health Club facilities. Rates are valid for local residents or foreigners with ACR. Managed by Bowsher Hotels and Resorts, the Malayan Plaza Hotel is the ASEAN service cooperative, Ortigas Center, in Pasig, offers furnished studio, one-bedroom and two-bedroom units that newly combine aesthetic values, comfort and functionality. Apart from featuring stylish interiors, The Malayan Plaza Hotel units are all air-equipped with complete living, dining and kitchen facilities. Other attractions include: cable network television, IDD/DDD telephones, individually controlled air-conditioning, hot and cold water in-room video intercom, broadband internet access in the rooms, helipad, swimming pool, open-air event pool with cabanas, lounge bar, restaurant, open-air event pool with cabanas, lounge bar, restaurant, children's playroom, housekeeping/laundry/concierge services, jogging-dining, and 24-hour security. For further inquiries, reservations and bookings, contact The Malayan Plaza Hotel at tel. nos. (632) 636-0000/634-6534, fax (632)634-2988, online reservations, sales@bowshertravelnet.com website: www.themalayanplaza.photobiz.com and share questions-replies.com

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PUNTA FUEGO COMMUNITY RUNS FOR A CAUSE

Club Punta Fuego together with Mizuno organized an invitational fun run for members and guests to benefit the Village Foundation's Feeding Program, Amateur and seasoned runners alike took on the hilly terrain of 5k, 10k and 15k race courses yielding many records lost compensated by the breathtaking sea view and the sumptuous awarding brunch buffet that followed. The 15k category was dominated by Club member, Ferdinand Velmez with timing at 52 minutes and 30 seconds, behind by only 15 seconds is UP "Track Team's boy Jaemar followed by another club member, Jasper Legaspi. Photographer: On The Run blogger Bee Chan took the 5k event ruled by Punta Fuego's executive chef, Mhel Arriz; and Jason Legaspi. While the 10k run was lead by Reuel Aparato's members Jeffrey Legaspi and Dindi Resmoso respectively all five players won Mizuno's Crusader Wave 9 among other prizes. The Punta Fuego Run was made possible by Alaska Milk and Rush Liquid Energy Drink. Club Punta Fuego is developed by Landco Pacific Corporation and operated by Pacific Hotels and Properties.

Vina Morales invades Hotel Stotsenberg

HOTEL STOTSENBERG AND Casablanca Casino in cooperation with Elite Gaming is proud to present "Showgirl Vina Morales rolls at Stotsenberg" in concert as their first year anniversary on July 26, at 9 p.m. The concert will be held at the Stotsenberg Convention Center located at G1 Pupar Avenue, Clark Freeport Zone, Pampanga.

Vina has long lists of accomplishments and successful local and international concert shows. This July, she turns her one-on-one guests the stage at the Stotsenberg Convention Center where she will showcase a packed entertainment from the hits of Beyonce, Donna Summer and a lot more that will surely keep us to the groove. Ticket prices are at P1,500, P1,000, and P800. For reservations you may call 045-499-0777 local 6226 or 0917 8378533.

Hotel Stotsenberg has a special promotion for guests who would like to spend the night at the hotel after the show. Presumptuous concert-goers and avail 30 percent discount on room rates based on the hotel's standard rate. In-house guests enjoy the 20 percent discount on food and beverage when dining at the hotel outlets such as Twist Cafe, Hacienda Lounge, 6 Bar, Blue Spoon Bar and a 10 percent discount on the Hotel in-room Spa.

Hotel Stotsenberg and Casablanca Casino Anniversary Concert is brought to you by Blue Haus International Inc, RTI, Elliot International, Kelowood Trading, Manila Cars Pampanga, Cebuana Lhuillier, BDO, Dunkin Office Systems Corporation, Orix Auto Leasing, Stellaner Electronics Corporation, GV100 99.1, Kiss Silonia, Runner Ben's Country Style Meat Processing Corp, Coca Cola, Infinit by Grandeza San Miguel and Hexton.

SHARED HERITAGE. Lenn Arsenio of Kislyon Design and Ramona Ernst-Arsenio

PEEPS

Across the seas

ULTRAMAR: A place or a country that is across an ocean, overseas, from the point of view of the subject.

TO COMMEMORATE PHILIPPINE-SPANISH Friendship Day, a special exhibit entitled "Ultramar" brought together contemporary Spanish, Filipino and Filipino-at artists at the GB Design Plaza along Gramer Garcia Street, Makati City. The city's cultural elite gathered on its opening day on June 19 to view the amusing displays using palettes of light, shape and sound. The ongoing exhibit showcases the works of Ramon Tilan, Juan Jose Schneider, Guillermo Parral, Steph Hilario, Yves Seckerd, Cesar Caballero, and Stefan Lorenzutti. Exhibit runs until July 3.

Ultramar is the creative offspring of Atelier Design, the Embassy of Spain, the Consulate of Philippine-Spanish Friendship Day with the collaboration of Galeria Arte and Arenas artists.

POINT OF VIEW Artist Steph Pedido

SOUNDSCAPE. Stefan Lorenzutti

WORDSMITHS. Jerry Sumalinog and Audrey Carpio

JAVIER Laporta of Spanish Embassy, Ed Sabor of Sabor to Asia and artist to focus Cesar Caballero.

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Fiesta San Miguel's new offerings

License to grill

Bellevue's Wine Society

THE BELLEVUE MANILA, THE PREMIER business hotel smack of the Metro, recently launched its winter one-two in ground-breaking and in their magnificent and breathtaking grand ballroom, the launch proved to be an auspicious one as the créme de la créme of Manila's A-listers flocked to the hotel to sample the fine Chilean wines brought by guest of honor and wine connoisseur Ilya Tillit. The brilliant vancouver Bellevue general manager Pon Ick Chan and marketing and communications director Ryan Chan made sure everyone enjoyed themselves with the venue's exquisite ambiance, accommodating staff, delectable canapés and varied choices. The Bellevue Wine Society is fast becoming the group of choice to wine circles, with regular wine tastings scheduled each month, coupled with fantastic and luxurious rewards such as purchases and cottage lists in the hotel.

Also a hectic day at work, invite your girlfriends to get together and party at The ReStyle's 20/20 bar. For fourteen epic nuts of the Metro, Every Wednesday for the month of June, ladies will surely enjoy some fun this chic while cutting down with the bar's free featured drinks for the night. Every Tuesday birthday celebrants of the month would surely get a bang as they will be treated to a free cold and delicious pitcher of selected drinks. Celebrants would just need to present a valid ID indicating their birthdates to get the complimentary drinks for the evening, from 8 p.m. to 12 a.m. If that is not enough, the 20/20 bar gives you a reason to chill out and party daily with 50 percent off on selected beers, wine and spirits from 8 p.m. to 9 p.m. For inquiries, call 771-8181.

SCOTTISH SALMON AND OYSTERS HIGHLIGHT PRINCE ALBERT'S MENU

Something new is cooking at the Prince Albert Restaurant. Scottish salmon and oysters are the main attraction in the restaurant's menu till the end of June. Portions of exquisite dishes created by French chef Patrick Fournes and his culinary team as they offer a new twist on these prized ingredients. Must try on the menu are the Poached Scottish Salmon Fillet with Hollandaise Sauce and White Summer Truffle Potato Salad; Scottish Salmon and Asparagus Tartar with Arugula Leaves and Gazpacho Dressing; Grilled and Scottish Oysters on a Bed of Spinach with Cream and Parmesan and Dinner Sauce; Roasted Scottish Salmon with Asparagus Tempura, salted fresh Cheese Potatoes and White Summer Truffle Sauce just to name a few. Scottish salmon and oysters will be offered in the restaurant's lunch and dinner menus. Executives on the go can also enjoy them as part of the French Brasserie set menu available lunchtime from Monday to Friday. The restaurant is open for lunch from Monday to Friday from 12 noon to 2:30 p.m. and for dinner Monday to Saturday from 7 p.m. to 10:30 p.m. Classical guitarist, Jose Valdez, performs nightly. For reservations, call 795-7000.

THE REIGN IN SPAIN. Spanish players celebrating victory over Italy.

PASCOT on camera.

When sleep hits the fan

From page E1

were put on to the dish—all these are the first outward signs of the dedicated fan, who has been watching the Euro matches at an ungodly hour, and like a lone soldier, would creep to work a few hours later. I had in fact found one such specimen, and he told of his travails.

"The main difficulty is catching international football matches here is the time these games are played. Due to the time difference with Europe, matches will begin at 10 p.m. (Manila time earlier) and 1 a.m. later," Bleighm Bar explains, still wired from two shots of espresso. "Second, for non-caffeinated instruments like the Euros or the World Cup, these are only shown on pay-per-view or satellite TV, so you either cough up the money or trek to the nearest bar, and lately an expat bar at that."

This year's Euro 08 satellite feed costs P2,500, which is still cheaper than the World Cup season's pass fees years ago. Those who pay, like a good friend of mine who is still heartbroken over the Dutch defeat, believe it's worth every cent.

DUTCH treat

Ah, sweet luxury—watching the games at 3 a.m. to pajamas, ensconced in fluffy pillows and blankets, snuggled up with the wife/girlfriend, or a bottle of beer.

Pointing that last resource, by the way, made me feel like I just uprooted chest hair.

But the rise of us, however, it's all about numbers. Says Bleighm Bar, "Because I live in QC, I have to leave work early—two hours, easy, make up at 2 a.m., either bath or no bath, score an expat bar and catch a 3:45 a.m. match. That's devotion for you."

Finding The 'Expat' bargain

Those expat bars, as another friend Jen's call from Bleighm Bar at 23 explains, "are concentrated in Makati, because that's where most expats live." He also drives to the city from the north, but instead of leaving past midnight, he'd rather just hop around town five or six hours before the big game.

In the happy days, there'd be other places outside Makati showing the games. I recently checked out this newly opened English pub in my neck of the woods south of the toll exit. I walked in and a looked promising English soccer-themed rave-down tavern, filled above the smoke clouds of smoke hanging about them, watching the highlights of the previous day's Holland-Russia game. I walked over to the waitress to ask if they showed the Euro 08 live. She blinked once. Then I pointed to the TV and asked once more. She blinked twice. "Soccer? Meron ba?" Then she handed me a menu, saying they were showing all 31 pala Denmark-Sweden, Fiji and Libya today."

There of course, enters the next hurdle, the issue of cost. "Expat bars" usually mean "expat prices," and for those of us who don't earn expat salaries, that just exclusively to "experiences." Yes, that means looking past three times more than what you'd usually pay for a drink. Add all those nights up, plus the exorbitant gas prices, and you might as well have bought the Hyatt Sky subscription, and a keg of beer.

"Ultimately," concludes Bleighm Pan # 1, "that's why it's hard to find what Pinoy fans—them don't any and chow ones say because there's no chance for them to watch."

As I type this, the upcoming scheduled match is the semi-final between Spain and Russia. Whoever wins this game gets on to the finals against Germany. Now Russia is the high note of good-looking players on their team, Spain, uh no. Pro bono, a few other female friends who are willing to stay up late and watch the game on a big screen so this labor has also an ear good results. Along with the other Bleighm Party Pans, we're going all the way to the finals.

Yes, all five of us.

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KLOSE CALL. Germany's Miroslav Klose, second right, scores his team's second goal during the semifinal match between Germany and Turkey.

WANT TIXET! A pro-Tibet protester is held by security forces after running onto the field.

SATURDAY Special

Editor Nestor U. Torre ● Assistant Editor Rina P. Jimlo

You can't keep good show biz veterans down

By Nestor U. Torre

BOY BANDS ARE BIG longer in season, despite the Jonas Brothers' being the juvenile exception to this dreadnaw rule. But, the US entertainment scene was recently pleasantly surprised by the unexpectedly strong comeback of the New Kids on the Block, one of the pioneering boy groups in the '90s.

ALIPOOR, the comeback warrior: "Can't wait to get back to work." Story on page 11

What was impressive about the "new-old" Kids' comeback on US TV was the fact that they didn't try to look as youthful as they did decades ago.

Unlike some other entertainers who try to freeze their graceful persona in a futile way to fear of disappointing their fans, the Kids now present themselves as men, not boys. This is a sensible move, because their fans have matured along with them, and don't want to see pickled and preserved versions of their former faves!

Signature songs

As more mature performers, the Kids may still sing some of their signature songs, but they now infuse them with a new edge and "voice of experience" that heightens the impact of their performances.

It is hoped, of course, that the headliners will soon add new songs to their repertoire, the 90s!

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Tara's jewels

TARA DELA RAMA designs rings, bracelets, earrings and brooches, as she is very excited to talk about learning jewelry photography like was born in Los Angeles, California, but she was raised in the Philippines by her grandmother, until she moved back to the US at age 10.

In college, she took up architecture, but she soon found herself in a jewelry-making class. Later, she earned a graduate degree in jewelry design at the Gemological Institute of America.

During a visit to Manila, she met her mom's classmate, [illegible]

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'The Real Me' turns Bea Alonzo's dream into musical reality

By Rito P. Avila

WHEN WE HEARD THE NEWS that Bea Alonzo has been chosen for the coveted lead role of the local version of Fernando Bauluto's wildly successful telenovela, "Betty La Fea," we were pleased...she looks credible's Yuppie to a nicer extreme.

After all, the 1999 Colombian soap opera has become a worldwide phenomenon that has since spawned countless spin-offs on the book rehe—including "Ugly Betty," the Peabody, Golden Globe and Emmy Award-winning American TV series.

Directed by Joel Lamangan, "The Singing Bee" and "I'm Sorry About You," a romantic-com, her voice has a certain grunge quality—and her tassel-to-throaty singing style swings from Tori Amos and Sarah McLachlan to Sara Bareilles and, ess, Lolita Carbon in her heyday with Aerie.

She loves twisting half- and quarter-notes and enjoys sweeping them on her way to the right melody—which sometimes makes her falter! Obviously, if she chooses to pursue this vocal route and style, she would considerably limit the type of songs she could sing.

ALONZO. Gets double exposure from debut album and new TV show, "Betty La Fea."

Immensely popular

But, we weren't very enthusiastic when we learned that Bea has also decided to dabble in recording. Sometime ago, we caught her singing Celine Dollar's immensely popular radio hit, "Bubbly," on ASK.CBR's "K.I.A.P."...and, while we were not turned off by what we heard, we weren't thrilled, either.

Worse, when we switched to GMA-7's "S.O.P," Regine Velasquez-Alcasid was having a go at the Broadway standard, Jerry Herman's "Hello, Dolly!"...Velasquez—along with Whitney Houston and Mariah Carey—is the 30-year-old actress' favorite singing idol. Really, now—just how does she compare? Unsurprisingly, the single's likable but complete, was unduly sung in one-note for the last couple of days.

Fortunately, Bea doesn't run away from challenges. A single spin of her guitar-and-dance-driven acoustic cover of Wrigley's dance hit, "Close to You"—the third cut from her solo recording debut, "The Real Me"—is enough to prove that the girl can, indeed, carry a tune. In fact, she does it very well—with a lot of help from Mike Villegas' catchy, finger-snapping arrangement.

Initial apprehension

In the album's liner notes, she shares her initial apprehension: "It has always been my fascination to be a singer. But, growing up a fan of Whitney, Mariah and Regine, I thought I could never be one! Thanks to Tito Sotto(Bella Regalado-Reyes and Jonathan Manalo (the album's producers), who made me realize that a person need not have a high-pitched voice to be a real singer!" And sing, she does.

However, Bea's vocal quality doesn't quite fit the conventional ballad-and-pop mold. In the groove-sounding tracks, "I'm Missing You" and "I'm Sorry About You," demonstration, her

Original compositions

The singer-actress possesses a rare but unique voice that would benefit more from singing original compositions than covers. For instance, she acquits herself well in her remake of Michael Johnson's "I'll Always Love You," though her version of the folk Kim Hart-Jones' ballad is a far cry from Michael's recent countrified croon.

Truth is, Bea is at her best when she just sings it straight—devoid of the off-putting vocal curlicues—as she confidently proves in the album's haunting torch, "Kagandahan," the theme song of the upcoming "Betty La Fea." When the gently synesthesia the actor's convincing final notes, she'll get acclimated!

'Veladas' were the theatrical events of their time

By Bobs Cortuanos

BEFORE THEATER BECAME the professional craft it is today, it used to be a pastime, a diversion mostly exercised during vacation, which were programs that showcased campus singers, dancers and declaimers, organized annually by collegiate student-actor schools to celebrate anniversaries or birthdays of patron saints.

Students were given a quota of tickets to sell to raise funds for their school. Artists were a measure of song and dance numbers, with concerts that usually showcase plays or episodes in the life of a patron saint, anyone worth his performing salt was made to pass.

Participation

To maximize participation, students organized choirs and dance troupes. The more participants there were, the better, because they then could sell more tickets to family and friends. The principal or school dean would be on top of everything, while English teachers would be tasked to direct the show. The best English speakers were chosen as narrators and lead performers.

Since this was an official school activity, it was deemed an honor to be handpicked to perform—no matter if you were a mere member of the chorus. Attendance at rehearsals was required.

Of course, you had to take care of your own costumes and props. If someone in school made it, you asked your parents to shoulder the expenses.

Foundations

By the late 1960s, Cecile Guidote and Zenaida Amador put up the Philippine Educational Theater Association (Peta) and Repertory Philippines, respectively. They were doggedly set on establishing theater as a professional industry in the country. Jess Edades, Severino Montano, Freddie Ramirez, and Bert and Daisy Avellana had painstakingly laid down its foundations decades earlier.

In the suburbs, you worked for many weeks, and all you got was the pleasure of the audience's applause! I'm slightly amazed when young theater aficionados today inquire about talent fees. Indeed, times have changed from our whole days, talent was did it all for love and kisses—and, of course, for art's sake!

You can't . . .

From page F1

speak of their thoughts and feelings now, years after they first made it in the music biz, in both closed and open corners.

Kids are by no means the only former show biz stars on the comeback trail this season...Max Soon is re-debuting for the big screen in Rondel Sherlok, whose TV/film career was capped some years back by the hit sitcom, "Suddenly Home."

Young readers

In the interim, Sherlok has branched out—other careers as a writer of stories for young readers that latest book teaches children how to deal with the arrival of a new baby in the family).

On Monday, June 30, however (3 p.m. on 2nd Avenue), Sherlok is going back to TV acting by way of "Lipstick Jungle," a series about three "power" women in New York City.

Sherlok is cast...a film executive who tries to balance family and career. The other lead characters are played by Kim Sayre (as a fashion magazine editor) and Lindsay Price (as a designer desperately in search of "true Love").

Show "Lipstick Jungle" shares the same creator (Candace Bushnell) as "Sex in the City" and both shows are about maturing "power" women. Sherlok's star career is already being compared, perhaps unfairly, to Bushnell's previous hit show. But, the comebacking TV star assures viewers than she and her current fully treated to make their new series a hit on its own terms.

And, on the local film front, it's Annabelle Rama who's the current Comeback Queen by way of her first movie in decades, "Mommy Mom." Annabelle began her acting career in the '50s as a teen star, but was soon gave up performing to bring up her and Eddie Gutierrez's big brood (of eight—count 'em!—others have now also "gone show biz").

Annabelle may have stopped performing all these years, but she's become a popular guest on TV shows due to her idiosyncratic personality and sharp tongue. Thus, she's making her film comeback not as an ex-star, but as a celebrity whose life is her best performance.

Big difference

Of course, there's a big difference between being flitty and spunky in real life, and executing viewers' interest for 90 minutes in a full-length film. So, we'll be watching "Mommy Mom" when it opens on July 2 to see if Annabelle will be able to do just that.

Finally—and best of all, as far as we're concerned—the Stella Stevens is making her film comeback with "Cave House," a drama about unexplored shot in the Ifugao by Susvene Bautista. The good news is that "Cave House" will be shown on QTV-11 at 9 p.m. today.

Ate Vi stresses importance of drinking milk

DARANGAS GOVERNOR AND AC-claimed actress, Vilma Santos-Recto, believes that milk drinking is an important part of proper nutrition.

This is why she is a staunch supporter of Best Brand's "Laki sa Gatas," a campaign done soon on promote the maximal importance of milk in the health of children during their growing up years.

Ate Vi recalls that, when she was still a kid, her parents trained her to drink milk. "We only had purebred milk cheese and a glass of Best Brand as base to school," she shares.

Excellent source

Two glasses of Best Brand can be an excellent source of vitamins and minerals, like Vitamins A and B (riboflavin), protein and calcium for strong bones and teeth.

Best Brand also helps prevent certain diseases because it has antioxidants—Vitamin C, iron and Zinc, which exhibit cell damage and oxidation.

SANTOS. Advocacy for children's nutritional needs.

Vitamin C helps in forming collagen, which promotes skin strength and resilience, while Zinc supports a healthy immune system and good vision, and hastens the healing of wounds, and Iron is necessary in energy metabolism, cognitive development and immune function.

Approximating all that, Ate Vi says that drinking two glasses a day should be made a habit—especially by kids—to optimize their growth and development.

Integrated Acting, Scriptwriting and Directing Workshop starts July 14

FOR THE FIRST TIME IN THE Philippines, an Integrated Acting, Scriptwriting and Directing Workshop will be held in the new Spotlight Archive Center.

The new talent development studio has been put up by acclaimed professionals like Bobet Vela, Joey Alvarez, Tikoy Aspiras, Jimmy Javier and Noni Buencamino.

MONTAGE

as they say of "paying it forward" to the entertainment and performing arts industry that has been good to them.

The integrated workshop will be mentored by Nestor U. Torre, who has distinguished himself in all three areas. The intensive four-month course seeks not just to develop "triple-talented" performers, but to show them how expertise in one area further enhances competence in the others. Call Joy at (0922) 898-4644 or 899-8689.

'West Side Story' all set

Singer staging of the hit musical, "West Side Story," is all set to run at Meralco Theater this September and October. Directed by Mercedes Lauchengco Nalo, it stars Christian Bautista, Kyrella, Jonnie Manzo, Glen Alaghamdal, Rowena Tiller and Steve L, with musical direction by Gerard Salonga. Audie Gemora is the executive producer. Call 918-1111 loc 225, or 0917-...

Jonnee Manzo and Rowena Tiller have both played Kim in international productions of "Miss Saigon," and they're eager to perform for the first time for Manila's theater buffs.

Jet Li flies high in 'The Warlords'

The new one opts, "The Warlords," is turning out to be a very special movie for action superstar Jet Li. Not only is it making it big at the box office, but it's also earned him the Best Actor trophy at the Hong Kong Film Awards.

Li flexes muscle winning role in his latest action adventure.

In "The Warlords," Li plays General Pang, whose initial rise to fame and the near (the "Sibling Rivalries) and overcome power. To school drama, Christian Bautista and Kyrella play star-crossed lovers in latest staging of well-loved musical.

CHRISTIAN Bautista and Kyrella play star-crossed lovers in latest staging of well-loved musical.

do so, however, he must first rise to power. Ironically, as his fame grows, so does his ambition.

In time, he ends up clashing with his "blood brother," Chen Tie-Hu, a man of honor, and rising Pei-Ting, a charismatic soldier. As a result, the brothers-hood collapses and ends tragically—with only one brother remaining standing. "The Warlords" opens on July 9.

'Let's Just Play'

Multisubject grandest day of play has come! From 2 to 6 p.m. today at the Cubao Ice Center, the Let's Just Play Sports Festival will enjoy "Let's Just Play" a pro-social grassroots initiative dedicated to promoting physical activity, team spirit, fitness and general well being, and to encourage kids to engage in healthy active lifestyles.

Attractions include giant inflatables, bikers walls, a boat maze ride, 3D skateboarding, wave-riding, photo op rooms, and face painting courtesy Bench—each one style—with Nat and Alex's shower. Check out more information on www.letsjustplay.com.

CD Fever on third weekend

CD Fever, the audio and video sale of the year, is on its third weekend at the 10th floor of Universal Tower (Ernest Rhydon Center on the ground floor). Almost all musical and cinematic genres are represented.

Movies on TV

On HBO, July 1 at 4:30 p.m., "Spider-Man 3." July 2 at 5 p.m., "Mrs. Harris." July 3 at 8:45 p.m., "Dead Poets Society of the Third Kind." July 4 at 9 p.m., "Man of the Year."

On Cinemax, July 1 at 9 p.m., "Kiss Kiss, Bang Bang." July 2 at 3 p.m., "Dream's 13." July 3 at 8:45 a.m., "Once Upon a Time in Mexico." July 4 at 1 p.m., "The Contender . . . Airport '79."

Tara's jewels

Point page F1

Elizabeth Encarnacion, who's offered her a job as a designer for Kamikazee Jewelry—and found the career she wanted!

Elizabeth is very supportive of her young designers...and she senses her 21-year-old ward like a daughter. She's helping Tara start her own line of jewelry. The latter gathers ideas from fairy stories, like medieval queens and princesses. She educates her buyers about gems.

Diverse designs

Tara designs to enhance a gown's beauty. She creates uniquely handcrafted pieces that command attention. Her diverse designs are both modern and chic—and she takes into account the personality of the buyer, as well as her likes and dislikes.

Tara also finds pleasure in painting. She finds it less stressful to hang out with her male cousins...there's less fuss collaborations with Elizabeth's foundation is located at 32-A, Bonifacio st., San Diego ave., Sharpby, Cubao, Quezon City. Call 913-2976.

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KC shows off emerging versatility

CONCEPTION: Unique combination of talent, looks, charisma, genes and cheer.

By Nestor U. Torre

SLOWLY BUT SURELY, KC Concepcion is effecting her eventual domination of the local entertainment scene, at least as far as teen and young-adult fawn are concerned. Are other young female performers even aware of the multimedia takeover currently happening in their midst?

We figure that some of them are clueless about the distinct likelihood that they'll soon be relegated to back-up-dancer status while KC holds reminisces with increasing stellar confidence (and, let's hope, competence).

—Listen to think of it, even if they soon become aware of it, they can't do much about it, since the KC "star-making engine" is so well-in-place (and relentless that it can't be stopped).

Show biz genes

First off, KC's show biz genes can't be gainsaid. Parents Sharon and Gabby are certainly no goalposts in the "bankable stars" department, so their daughter, by rights, should be similarly superstardom-bound.

There, there's the long and careful preparation she's had for the big jolt ahead. Years ago, she got her feet wet in performing by acting, singing and dancing in a stage musical or two. Next, she did a slew of TV-film product endorsements that made her a sidelining stalwart (or even having to formally launch a perfume-ing career).

Then, she took all sorts of lessons, both here and abroad, that honed her performing skills, so that, when stardom finally and officially beckoned, she'd be good and ready to snatch her tiara and wear it proudly for all to be dazzled by.

Her first solo as a performer was in the acting department, by way of a limited series of TV-cinemas, followed by her decision to shoot her first feature film with Richard Gutierrez.

Then, recently on Channel 2's "WAIG" KC launched her first album, "a.k.a. Cassandra," with 12 cuts made up of songs of her own choice. On "WAIG" she performed two tracks from her debut album, "Imagine" and "Impossible," which showcased her emerging versatility.

Sultry and intense

Singing "Imagine," she was sultry and intense, as she did her own take on the famous pre-peace and -equality anthem. Then, with "Impossible," her performance took a rock turn and emphasized her fun-friendly "frilly flavor."

With these two diverse numbers, KC proved notice that, while she was gunning for fully popularity, she also wanted to occasionally go significant and artistic. —That's a combination that's difficult to pull off on the local performing scene, but we give KC "props" for even attempting it.

Now, the key question: How did KC do as a singer? "Imagine" benefited from her husky, felt tones, and her discrete, yet occasionally up-dimly calls on the song's lyrics were on-target.

On the minus side, however, her singing voice was thin to in high registers ...so, if KC really wants to become a major singing star, she should take voice lessons to beef her voice up in terms of range, volume and power.

Movies about weddings for hopeless romantics

By Sharon Bolton-Macarilla

ALTHOUGH OVERDOSES IN THE COUNTRY aren't held only in June, which is regarded as the Wedding Month, there are women who still opt to tie the proverbial knot today.

Through the years, those special occasions have been depicted in the movies in various ways. Many often than not, weddings themed films mirror the joys and pitfalls of what it's like to get hitched in real life. Some should see it like:

"My Big Fat Greek Wedding." If you're marrying someone from a different race, expect conflicts to arise as divergent cultural backgrounds of families clash.

Cross-cultural union

The movie depicts the ups and downs of a cross-cultural union, in which Greek-American Toula (Nia Vardalos) falls in love with and later on marrying all-American Ian (John Corbett), to the dismay of her father who values Greek tradition above all. Funny and touching at the same time, the film proves that, regardless of what race you're marrying into, true love conquers all!

"Runaway Bride." A Filipino saying goes: "Ang pag-aasawa ay hindi parang isang kanin na kinukulang lagyan ng asin." Simply put, marriage is a lifetime commitment. But, in this movie, the bride, Maggie Carpenter (Julia Roberts), runs away from her groom on her wedding day—three times! Or, Maggie's fourth chance to walk down the aisle, reporter Ike Graham (Richard Gere) is on hand to witness the event. Roberts' marriage proposal: to wait the end of the movie is something for hopeless romantics!

"Bread Shrine Alabama." Marrying a Buckhead sweetheart seems like blue—but not for Melanie (Reese Witherspoon) and Jake (Josh Lucas), who have since become estranged.

Now engaged to New Yorker Andrew (Patrick Dempsey), Melanie suddenly finds herself torn between her estranged husband and her dreamy fiancé. This movie chronicles the happy-ever-after journey.

"My Best Friend's Wedding." They're the best of friends. But Julia (Julia Roberts), however, the feelings goes beyond friendship... but Michael (Dermot Mulroney) loves another girl. Unrequited love is the last thing you wish to get embroiled in—especially when you're deeply in love with your best friend! So, she does everything to stop Michael's wedding! Will she succeed or will she learn to let go?

"The Wedding Planner." If you think leaving all the preparations to a wedding planner can make any bride run away, think again—especially if the planner happens to be as gorgeous as Mary Fiore (Jennifer Lopez), who finds it hard to resist the charming groom, Dr Steve Edison (Matthew McConaughey). Through they have already met previously, they sense that their feelings for each other is tantalizing as the special occasion draws closer.

ROBERTS AND CERE. Top-billed popular rom-com, "Runaway Bride."

Fortune

"The Bachelor." Will you marry for love or money? Jimmy (Chris O'Donnell) needs to find a wife or he will lose his fortune to his grandfather's 1000-million fortune. Will his true love, irene (Renée Zellweger), make it in time, or will Jimmy end up with one of hundreds of bride wannabes?

"Monster-in-Law." Tales of "monstery" in-laws have haunted couples through the years. Were other than not, they are depicted as meddling creatures who sometimes end up breaking up what is otherwise a perfect union.

So, must Jane Steele (as Viola, the monster-in-law) to give her soon-to-be daughter-in-law, Charlie (Jennifer Lopez), headaches as they try to outwit each other to win the affection of Kevin (Michael Vartan)?

ROMERO. Plays the caretaker of a rich family's mausoleum in "Pasquino."

Cast of indie drama all praises for Gloria Romero

By Ronald G. Mangubat

QUIRINO ESTATE, A CONSUMMATE ARTIST. These are just some of the words used to describe Gloria Romero, who is still regarded by her peers as one of show biz's living movie queens.

In her latest movie, "Pasquino," she accepts four more starred the administration of her director and creator. She plays the 70-year-old caretaker of a rich family's mausoleum, whose only wish in life is to be buried beside her departed husband.

Director Jowen Tan, who worked with the actress in a horror flick years ago, describes Romero as intelligent and sensitive. He reveals: "She comes to the set well-prepared, and she dispenses positively advice to everyone."

Relationship

Connie Smedley-Arena has worked with Tan on Gloria many times. She tells us, "Our relationship goes beyond the set, because I regard her as a second mother. One thing I can't forget about her, during those times when I was being unprincipled for my tardiness, she gave me a watch—but I did not get offended. She tells me my reminder straight to my face."

Another celebrity who has deep respect for Romero is Gemma Montes, whose friendship with the movie queen he traces back to their Sampaguita days. He also knew: "I personally asked her to star with me in this movie. We had several domestic stories together, and I was so nervous acting with her, but she made me feel very comfortable."

Angelu de Leon, who plays a vendor who's married to a felonies, agrees: "Napakagaan nung kausap—and she never complains."

Smedley adds: "The movie is the epitome of beauty...inside and out. That's why she's been in the business for such a long time!"

KC shows... From page B-1

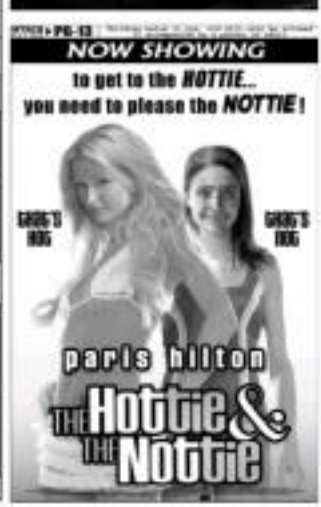
On "Impossible," she did fair well, because her voice lacked enough punch and vocals for the catchy tune. In fact, it sometimes cracked—so, we conclude that, at this early stage of her "official" singing career, she should avoid making her voice—and composers—do things that they aren't yet ready to successfully pull off.

Positive impression

All told, however, KC's voice of songs on "KC All" made a positive impression and launched her recording career with more of a bang than a whimper.

There are other young adult female recording artists out there with better voices, but they don't have KC's unique combination of adequate singing talent, looks, charisma, genes and clout...or they'd better beef up their acts, pronto, if they want to survive the ongoing KC "blitzkrieg" by show business.

The next big salvo from KC in her first feature starrer with Richard, directed by Mr. Joyce Bernal. Other young female movie leads, be afraid. Be very afraid.



Open auditions for 'Cory' musical to be held tomorrow

MRS. LOURDES "BING" PIMENTEL, THE producer and composer of the forthcoming original Filipino musical, "Cory," on the life and times of former President Corazon Co. Aquino, is elated by the public's encouraging enthusiasm and reaction to the announcement that the new musical will be staged at the Meralco Theater in December and November, with the principal support of Smart, PLDT and Star Mojave Corp.

Pimentel shares: "It's really inspiring to see that so many people are looking forward to the staging of Cory, the musical. We have received so many messages of encouragement! There are so many people who admire Cory for what she has so selflessly done for the country,—and her continuing service in the nation's conscience to this very day.

"That's why various theater figures in town and I are doing our utmost best to come up with a musical production that will do justice to Cory's many significant contributions to the country, especially to the restoration of our democracy and freedom."

Pertinence

"Cory" is Pimentel's fifth musical production, after "Huling Sumpa Aarte," "Himig Hulugang sa Langdag-Dawan," "Pintasan at Hantas" and "Ang-ding sa Bigtas"—all of them masterfully directed by Tony. Their past shows have won accolades for their pertinence on the nation's life, in different instances...spiritual, emotional/political.

That's why hopes are high that "Cory" will be similarly exceptional. And that Pimentel's 19 songs for the new musical will movingly capture the many dramatic impulses of Cory Aquino's life.

Since the sad but fruitful Sen. Ninoy Pimentel, later known the former president for many years, the composer has infused his songs for the show with profoundly informed insights and a personal appreciation of Cory's unique essence and sterling characters.

This early, Pimentel already has some clear ideas about the abilities and qualities required of the performers who can do justice to the principal roles in Tony's musical. In fact, some established talents' names have been suggested to him to make the show a truly stellar production.

Unsung talents

However, Pimentel is open to the infusion of exceptional but still relatively unsung talents into the musical, as open auditions will be held for all roles in the musical—from lead to chorus—for established, "unestablished" and even unknown performers.

The open auditions for the post's most significant new Filipino musical will be held at 3 p.m. tomorrow, June 29, at the Sta. Ana Arts Center (across Sta. Ana Church, behind the Plaza Hagonoy basketball court). Auditionees are asked to come in rehearsal clothes, and bring a color photo and a list of their experiences in performing. Singing auditions will be a capella. Call study for details at 09/0 286 6429/cell 564-8276.

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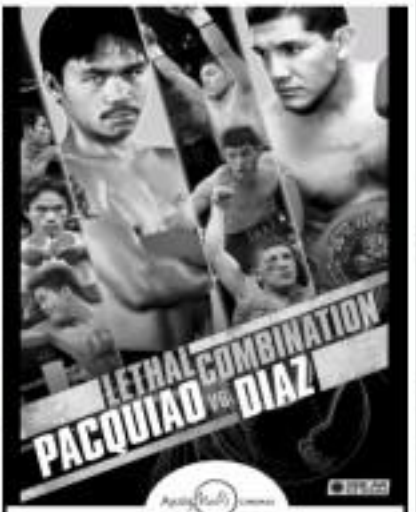

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Action beefs up Steve Carell's comic antics

By Rito P. Asido

"Get Smart"

Is three legal

Is Steve Carell, Anne Hathaway and Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson

JASON BOURNE AND THEIR doubles@ RUSH HOUR up their heels watch their backs Maxwell Smart (played to the scientific Steve Carell) may not always live up to his surname, but in his latest screen incarnation, the undoubtedly funny secret agent is definitely smart enough to know when to call in the cavalry. Enter Agent 23 (Anne Hathaway) and Agent 99 (Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson).

Just as Max might himself to the face of being a "middle-aged man who missed the train, [the government] never Twin Cities" Hans Asker to eliminate his clients but ex-gov subordinate to say we hit—sir. Agent 99—is subtle, along with partner, Agent 99 (Ms. Hathaway Anne Hathaway), a series of routine duels that seem to save "my world" scenario, with the dimly funny relationship, cool gadgets and a whip-smart partner with. Max doesn't know anything about spending money a month, he is, in fact, a bungling mess.

Director Peter Segal gives Max the most broad brush he can. Carell, emerging with Hathaway and sweet partner but then rounds it

Here are his comedy chops. He jumps off pirates, mocks the Taliban in gravity-defying stunts, wears fossil-like dentures and dances a mean tango with a grenade for pin-eyed partner—and he gives The Rock a somewhat-believable partner. Hathaway (Get Smart 007 here she!)?

The fusion of comedy and hard action is a storytelling innovation that gives the movie its unique energy—although the "powerful" doesn't work consistently all the time.

In action scenes, viewers don't know whether to laugh or take them seriously as Carell's expressive screen presence. However, when a scene does work, it drives the audience to howling gallows—while they hold "Cinderella" a bouncy little ball of fun accompanying scene!

Moreover, if you're not familiar with the late '60s TV series, it would be hard to appreciate the winking humor behind Mr. Mercury's cameo appearances as Agent 13, who, on the show, is viewed only "behind" a newspaper—like tickets, reading matinees, mailboxes and lunch.

Carell may have had his share of cinematic misfires ("Dan Mirsaky"), but he is perfectly suited for the role of Max of the moment. In fact, he might himself very well even in his former near-flames ("This is Real Life"), stunt-filled disasters ("Little Miss Sunshine"), and animated features ("Over the Hedge," "Horton Hears a Who!"). Unfortunately, the 46-year-old actor doesn't have much chemistry with his 28-year-old costar. Yes, there's something about the word-rumored fact that will make audiences root for the romantic angst—but Carell, Hathaway and sweet partner just have to make it.

Rating: 3 stars

Lea on Arnel Pineda, daughter Nicole and her LA show

LOS ANGELES—"I GET UP, sing a lot, sign autographs, eat, and then go home." Lea Salonga made it sound like her list of mundane things to do for the day when we recently asked her what she would do in her July 11 concert at the prestigious Walt Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles.

But, of course, when Lea sings, there's nothing mundane about it. Her impeccable voice and accomplished, crystal-clear diction have been mesmerizing listeners from London to Seoul, South Korea, where she performed recently. She told us via e-mail that, much to her surprise, "We were received so warmly in Korea, and with so much enthusiasm. I actually felt like a rock star!"

Normally a venue for the world's top classical music artists, the Walt Disney Concert Hall (the former Los Angeles Opera) is an effort to draw people who don't usually attend concerts at the distinctive Frank Gehry-designed structure. The show will no doubt be another high point in the singer's multi-award-filled career. Tickets to the Walt Disney Concert Hall show on July 11 at 8:30 p.m. are available at www.ticketmaster.com. For groups, e-mail globalpop@ticketmaster.com.

Rehearsals

Currently in Manila, Lea, whose masterful vocal artistry is showcased in her studio and live-concert recordings under the Sony BMG Philippines label ("Inspired" is her latest album), has begun rehearsals for the Asian touring production of Rodgers and Hammerstein's "Cinderella."

In our Q and A, she shared her excitement about the LA concert, declared that Arnel Pineda's joining journey is inspiring, and revealed that Nicole, her 2-year-old daughter with her husband, Robert Chien, has started to entertain her dreams.

You've performed on some of the world's premier concert and musical theater stages. But, this will be your first time to have a concert at the prestigious Walt Disney Concert Hall. What are your thoughts on being the first Filipino performer to have a show in it?

Oh, goodness! I'm excited to be performing there. As much as it is fantastic that I'll be the first Filipino artist to have a show there, there aspect doesn't matter as much as just being in that beautiful hall. My being the first one there isn't necessarily important—as long as it happens!

Diverse communities

With the album, you also have the honor of launching "Global Pop at the Music Center," a series of concerts featuring popular international performers representing the diverse communities of Los Angeles. The Allee Bilideon, the center's volunteer support group, hopes that this "first show in the series kicks off in a big way their goal of bringing new audiences—especially the five followers of global pop artists like you—to the Walt Disney Concert Hall. "Global pop artist" has a nice ring to it...doesn't it?

I honestly don't think about it—I just do my work, then I go home. If the end result is process visibility for me in the global arena, then wonderful! More artists will then reap the benefits. I mean, it's not nerve-racking anymore to think that OPM (Opm) singers are now reaping the benefits of what Arnel Pineda has done, being the frontman of Journey. He is one inspiring story—and it gives artists hope that they can also make their mark internationally.

By coincidence, the second artist scheduled in the "Global Pop" series is the Sikh pop duo, Sly to the Sky. Even South Korea, where you just had a concert. Does did that get? I read that you were surprised to get an offer to perform in Korea.

The concert in Seoul was an incredible experience! Honestly I didn't set any expectations high—I didn't know if I even had an audience there. I thought that the audience would mostly be composed of fellow Filipinos, and I also thought we would have a very polite and conservative crowd. But, was I wrong! We were received so warmly, and with so much enthusiasm. I actually felt like a rock star!

How would the LA concert be any different from your other shows?

This time, we'll have a bigger band onstage, to take advantage of that concert hall's acoustics. Other than that, it'll be similar to my other shows. I get up, sing a lot, sign autographs, eat, and then I go home.

Special venue

How special is the venue (the) to you, since it's very close to the Cathedral where you got married, and it's right beside the Shark Tank forum, the venue of "Forever Dream Song," where you met Robert's cousin in the cast, who introduced you to him?

That entire area is special to me, because I met my husband and married him there. So, to have a concert there would be absolutely sweet! It would be great to do a reunion at the Music Center again.

You also performed with Patti Austin in San Francisco recently. Did you get to talk to her about the time she performed in Manila?

Actually, I didn't get to speak with her a lot—our time together in San Francisco was limited, and she was incredibly busy when she wasn't performing. But it was fun. I was able to spend some much-needed quality time with friends from that area—people whom I hadn't seen in years. The show was great, but getting together with friends was a blessing!

Environment

I saw a nice photo of you apparently taken during a rehearsal. Nicole was on your lap, while you were rehearsing with Gloria Stevens, and with musicians around. With genes from her mom and growing up in a music-filled environment, how can Nicole not grow up to become a singer? Has she started singing? What are her favorite songs, so far? What tunes do you like singing to—and with—her?

The scene way that kids of divorces don't always grow up to follows in their parents' footsteps. Just because Nicole is surrounded by a doesn't mean she'll want to be a part of it. At the end of the day, what she does real up doing in life is real. by up to her. I'd rather she be whatever makes her happy and fulfilled.

But, having said that, Nicole has started to imitate me, using her MegaMike as microphone, she sings with her own mouth-up songs—and it's always with a big finish! As for what I like singing in here, it's usually something from "Sesame Street." I'm on a major Old-School "Sesame Street" kick, so I like singing to her what I remember watching as a preschooler!

E-mail rmpadua_1688@yahoo.com and read his blog, "The Popular Expert," at http://blog.inquirer.net/rmpadua/expert.

SALONGA, "Filipino singers are reaping the benefits of what Arnel Pineda has achieved."

Predictable rom-com proves charm is not enough

By Nestani Tiava

THOSE ARE THEIR WEDDING VOWS. wonder if Hollywood is already being run by expensive marketing. Are romcoms just the romantic-comedy "Made of Honor," you'll wonder if the movie was actually made by people or if they just left the work for the machines to do.

Smooth and polished

Smooth and polished, the film has the shiny look and feel of mass-produced merchandise... it's nice, attractive and critically likewise) to many other films that are already out in the market. In other words, this Best Wedding-beloved movie about a hetero who realizes he's in love with his best friend just when she's about to get married isn't saying much that's new.

Starring Patrick Dempsey, Michelle Monaghan, Kevin McKidd, Kathleen Quinlan and Sydney Pollack, the movie has a story that is similar to "My Best Friend's Wedding," as well as Scottish wedding scenes (last being to mind "Four Weddings and a Funeral."

Patrick "McDreamy" Dempsey is Tom, a rich, romantic city guy who has just dropped his way through the length and breadth of Manhattan. For 10 years, he's been best friends with Hannah, a charming and genuinely likable Michelle Monaghan.

When Hannah leaves New York for the rolling of Scotland on a

MONAGHAN AND DEMPSEY
Share friendship and love in "Made of Honor."

six-week trip, Tom realizes that he's in love with her. But she comes back with an engagement ring on her finger and a tale, wrapping Scottish fiancé Hector MacMael to woo Hannah asks Tom to be her Maid of Honor, a role he accepts so he can stop the marriage from the inside.

The usual gags and complications ensue—but instead up, he becomes an expert on, dress bridging and chintz, everybody thinks he's gay etc. The ending, as expected, involves a last-minute rush—to horseback, mind you—to stop the wedding crime!

Limitations

Dempsey has a certain onscreen charm, but he can't get past the limitations of the bland script. Monaghan, on the other hand, manages to rise above it—she's a heroine you can actually share. McKidd (of HBO's "Rome" fame) is wasted. The rest tried hard, but they just can't make the movie diversity-funnier it tries to be.

Rating: 2 stars